

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

UNIFORM WITH THIS VOLUME

OVER BEMERTON'S

LISTENER'S LURE

LONDON LAVENDER

MR. INGLESIDE

ROSE AND ROSE

GENEVRA'S MONEY

LOITERER'S HARVEST

OLD LAMPS FOR NEW

ONE DAY AND ANOTHER

THE GENTLEST ART

EVENTS AND EMBROIDERIES

THE FRIENDLY TOWN

LUCK OF THE YEAR

FIRESIDE AND SUNSHINE

BY

E. V. LUCAS

O *THERE* ARE LIFE'S LEAST-SHADOW'D HOURS—
BESIDE THE FIRE; AMONG THE FLOWERS.
AND DEATH, IF EVER, SEEMS A LIAR
AMONG THE FLOWERS; BESIDE THE FIRE.

T. FARQUHARSON

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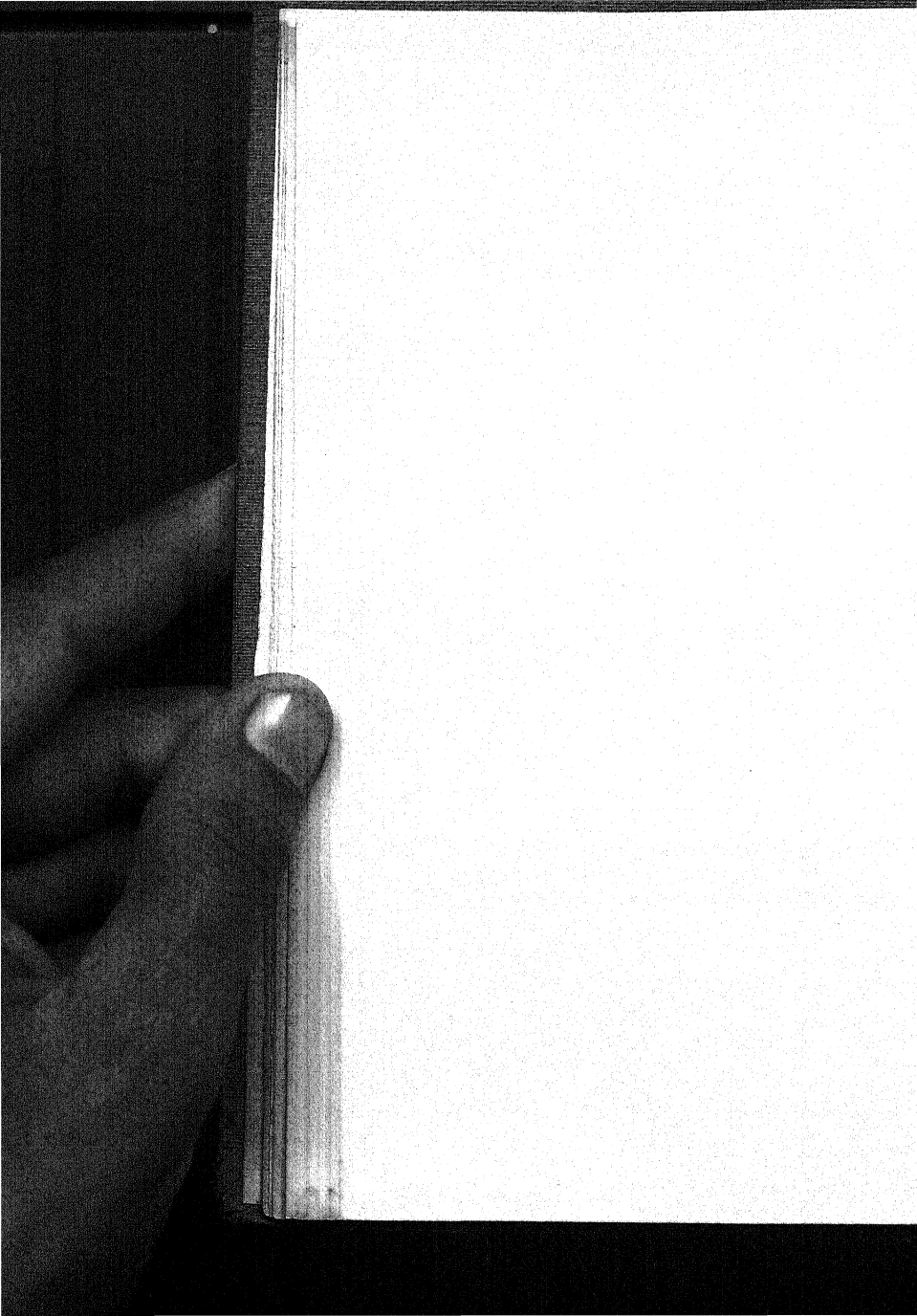
PREFACE

THOSE of the following essays that have a single asterisk against them in the list of contents are reprinted almost *verbatim* from *Domesticities* (Smith Elder, 1900). Those with two asterisks are also from *Domesticities*, but have been enlarged. The rest are new, and consist of contributions to *Good Words* in its old form, the *Outlook*, the *County Gentleman*, and other periodicals. For permission to collect them I wish to express thanks.

E. V. L.

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FIRESIDE AND SUNSHINE

From a Country Diary—I ♡ ♡ ♡

I HAVE been sitting still for full twenty minutes watching a mouse.

No one, not even its bitterest foe, can deny a mouse the epithet pretty. It is as pretty a thing as there is in nature. A mouse sitting up and washing its face is irresistibly charming. It cannot make an ugly movement. The rat is too large for sentiment : a greater, coarser, more terrible mouse ; but the mouse is perfect. The rat is furtive, vindictive, suspicious, evil ; the mouse is timid, coaxing, the most engaging little creature in the world to watch. The very run of a mouse is a miracle ; it is here, it is there, and you cannot account for the intervening space. A real mouse moves as much like a clock-work mouse as is possible ; its feet (practically it has no legs) are invisible. When not frightened or in a hurry, a

The Mouse

mouse moves in little jerks, half a yard or so at a time. It is continually alert for danger, but a human being is considered formidable only if he moves or makes a noise. A passive observer excites no alarm: in one of the novels of Richard Jefferies there is a description of a farmer who used to fall asleep in the kitchen and be overrun by mice as he slept.

A mouse to children is always a "little mouse"—as if it would some day grow up. The oldest desperado in the kitchen, hoary and decrepit, a veteran steeped in depredation, the great-grandfather of hundreds of young ravagers, even he to the children, if they catch a glimpse of him, is that "dear little mouse." How he must smile in his moustache, this old villain, as he hears them! The mouse has peculiar claims on the interest of the child. It is quaint, and pretty, and mysterious. It lives in a hole, and can disappear through narrower cracks than anything else except water; and most children at one time or another would like to live in a hole. Its life depends on its successful avoidance of the cat on the one hand and the cook and her traps on the other; and the child, being more or less of a sportsman, naturally sides with so small a creature labouring against such odds. Moreover, the mouse is inoffensive: it merely eats

Our Educators

things in the larder and does not smell very nice—that is the extent of the charge against it. It has no fearsome stories attached to it, like the rat, of devouring Bishop Hatto and springing at the throats of pursuers.

◡ ◡ ◡

IT would be pleasant to know that here and there was a village schoolmaster who was whimsical and eccentric enough to permit his scholars to know as little as might be about spelling and dogma, and give them instead fascinating lessons on the nature around them. Under a very careless or eccentric vicar this would be possible.

What has made me think of it is the total ignorance of nurses concerning flowers, and birds, and animals, and all the other things about which children ask them questions. They know nothing; or worse, they know everything—wrong. Advice upon ethical matters children may obtain—if they are fortunate—from their parents; but it is the nurse who takes them walks and looks after them in the garden, and is their authority during those years when most things that are said by an authority linger in the memory and provide it with material upon which to improvise

Nurses' Fictions

a fanciful embroidery. This being so, how necessary it is that nurses should know ! How necessary ! And yet if all knowledge were forgotten, all Extension Lectures eliminated, all schoolmasters destroyed, all well-informed men removed, and we were forced back upon nurses for a reconstruction of the system of facts, the sun would exist merely to light the earth by day, the moon to light it by night ; the earth would be flat ; and, what is far more important in the indictment, thrushes would lay a small pink and white egg in a hole in the bank, oaks would be beeches and elms willows, dragon-flies would be butterflies, yellow hammers would be bullfinches, and to be wet through with sea-water would never lead to a cold.

I remember that when I was small and credulous we had a nurse who told us that such was the delicacy with which a moving train was balanced upon the rails that if only a pin were placed in its way it would be overturned. I believed this for years ; and then, greatly daring, I tried it, and was criminally regretful that no accident followed. Another nurse of a pious mind dinned it into our heads that to carry a walking-stick on Sunday was to invite eternal punishment—a doctrine which caused the more misery through involving so many of our friends. These are quite

Ptolemy Simplified

typical pronouncements. Coming to Natural History, I remember pursuing swallows all down the road, on the distinct understanding from my nurse that if a swallow once settled on the ground it could not rise again. A moment's observation would have told her otherwise, but for such things she had no eyes. All her faculties of vision were kept for high-water marks on necks and holes in stockings.



I CAME upon a good specimen of what might be called the homelifying or countrifying of poetry in an old paper to-day. One week the following epigram from the Greek of Ptolemy was printed :—

I know that I am mortal, and belong
To the vile sod I tread ; yet when I raise
My thoughts to heaven, and mingle in the throng
Of worlds that labour in close-ravelled maze,—
No longer then with the base earth I link,
But am with Jove indeed amid his ways,—
Share the same skies—from the same fountain drink.

A week or so later Ptolemy was thus served up in the dialect of the simple :—

I know as how I'm mortal, and am fell
Through sin and that,—I knows this 'ere quite well ;

Bedlingtons

And yet, Lord love you, Sir, tho' I'se no saint,
When I'se a-walking of a frosty night
And sees them stars—I'm blest if I be'n't quite
Another individual,—“I ain't
Joe Dobson now,” says I, “nor no such cove,
But blest if I arn't up along with Jove.”



WE have just suffered bereavement by the death of a blue-grey Bedlington, who had lived with us for four or five years, and in a way had become the head of the establishment, and seemed likely to deprive us in time of all independent will. I have known many dogs, but none so inflexible as this: a crystallised bachelor clubman among dogs, doing nothing that he did not want to, and standing a little aloof from the world, and yet having just enough intensity in his peat-stream brown eyes and his nuzzling nose to elicit and retain as much affection as he needed.

Of course to keep a Bedlington terrier in London or the South of England at all is a kind of cruelty; for the Bedlington is a miner's fancy, bred and nourished for no idler purpose than to meet other Bedlingtons in the waste and secret places of the North on Sunday mornings and fight it out to the full. A dog so disposed is not calculated to bring peace and blessing to

A Conqueror's Decay

Kensington Gardens, and therefore our friend had to be tamed into civility, or at any rate public peace.

He was, however, disposed to accept his fate, until, three years ago, we went to France for six weeks, whither now no dog may go and come back again, and I sent him as a boarder to one of those handy men in the country who are prepared to do most things. I did not know that he lived in a village where the dogs were given to fighting and where the butcher's bull-terrier too long had ruled. The result was that at the end of the six weeks I led our friend reluctantly back to his pacific quarters, dragging, like Goldsmith's "Traveller," at each remove a lengthening chain, for his mind was set on recent triumphs and much praise and the cowed contour of the butcher's bull-terrier's bark, once so confident and over-mastering.

He was never quite the same afterwards. He had tasted blood; he had "gone it" a little; he was a hero. A new mood of independence and solitary adventure came upon him. In London he made some effort to remain with his property whenever we walked out; but in the country, none. For the last few months of his life he came home only for his meals; which is perhaps the least satisfactory thing that a

Advocatus Angeli

dog can do. None the less he was our choice, and had been our good friend, and could always gaze or cosset his way back, and we were prepared to stand by him. But one day last month he ate some poisoned bread, and died ; and yesterday there came to live in the house, at our very heels, a black and white spaniel, always in broad laughter, of a social character so emphatic that he might be likened to a shadow. It is the completest contrast.

Advocatus Angeli ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪

YOU call him rogue—it may be so ;
 Betrayed of a confidence ;
A lukewarm friend ; a coward foe ;
A stranger to the moral sense.
All this and more : the charges grow,
And others share your vehemence.

'Tis true, perhaps ; but this I know :
That when he reaches home at night,
His dog is frantic with delight,
And licks his hand, and looks at him
With eyes that make his own eyes dim.

Alken's Sportsmen

THE other day in London I was looking through a collection of Alken's drawings : a collection particularly strong—for its owner is a shooting man—in gunning scenes. Alken's work has always had a peculiar fascination for me ; it represents so much that is pleasant to look back upon. Like "Pickwick," it stands for the good fellowship of the beginning of the century. I like Alken's sportsmen, whether on horse or afoot ; I like their shrewd, humorous faces, their clean-cut figures, their impossible hats and bottle-green coats, their general air of polite devilry and amused opportunism and open-handedness. But, best of all, I like their sense of sport. Armed with their long muzzle-loaders, and attended by one or two dogs, they start out prepared to go through so much in the pursuit of their game, and yet to give their game a decent chance too.

I was thinking about these pictures, and what they stood for, as I returned home in the train, and then, walking through the park, it all came back to me again with a rush. They have been rearing pheasant poults in the park this year ; and you come suddenly upon an open space, with dozens of hen coops, protected by flags and bushes, and in the midst of it the little sentry-box in which the keeper stands and

Questions of Sport

watches. Well, just as I came up to this rearing ground the keeper emerged with a tin of meal and began to whistle a peculiar low note ; and straight-way from every part of his domain started up little groups of young birds, all fluttering happily and trustingly towards him. Meanwhile he was throwing the food for them on the ground, just as one feeds chickens.

So far so good. But the 1st of October is coming, and the thought occurred to me that when we breed our quarry as carefully as this we are doing a hideous wrong to the birds—a wrong we should never think of extending to our fellow-creatures. To go out with a gun, a muzzle-loader for choice, and a dog, and seek your game—that is all right ; it is fair enough sport. You find your game, fire at it, hit or miss it, as the case may be, and the thing is over. The rushing glimpse of the bird as it flies into range is the first sight you have had of it. But to put a hen on eggs, and feed the chicks, and get to know them and teach them to know you (or your employees) ; in short, to deceive them into the belief that you are their friends, and then, on a given date of which they know nothing, to turn round and pour shot into the confiding things—that is degrading. Human nature is a very delicate

Pheasant and Hen

organisation, exceedingly susceptible to degradation, and it cannot withstand many attacks upon it such as this. After a while a man who would deceive a pheasant might come to deceive his neighbours.

On my way out of the park, through a little path in a wood, I had a curious illustration of the slender line of demarcation that now separates a tame bird from a game bird. I met first a pheasant, and then a hen. The pheasant was fat and cumbrous, and he made off with a great show of avoidance and memory of last season's fusillade. The hen was brisk and shapely, and she approached me without any qualms. I was foe to one and friend to the other; but it seemed odd that there should be this difference, particularly as the hen was by far the more spirited and active bird of the two. But had I been a sportsman instead of a mere perplexed observer, it would, I suppose, have been the fat, ungainly pheasant that would have set my pulses beating.



I WAS the other day at Bemerton, George Herbert's church near Salisbury, one of the sacredest little churches I ever saw, and as I came out I noticed on the wall of the vicarage opposite, since largely rebuilt,

George Herbert

the lines which Herbert wrote for the mantel of the chimney in the hall in his day—

TO MY SUCCESSOR.

If thou chance for to find
A new house to thy mind,
And built without thy cost :
Be good to the poor,
As God gives thee store,
And then my labour's not lost.

It was pleasant to stand before the very house where, on the Sunday before his death, holy Mr. Herbert "sung such hymns and anthems as the angels, and he, and Mr. Ferrar, now sing in heaven."

Rather a nice little anthology might be made of verses inscribed on buildings, not a few of which probably would be vicarages. And this reminds me that in Mr. C. E. Byles' life of Hawker of Morwenstow, just published, are quoted not only the lines which that sturdy churchman and village autocrat cut in his vicarage wall, but also the comment upon them which a local satirist offered. These are Hawker's lines—

A House, a Glebe, a Pound a Day ;
A Pleasant Place to Watch and Fray.
Be true to Church—be kind to Poor,
O Minister ! for evermore.

R. S. Hawker

And this is the gloss of the parishioner, probably
some Dissenter smarting from Hawker's scorn for
Nonconformists—

With all these benefits supplied,
A pound a day, and more beside,
How very good this man should prove,
How full of zeal, how full of love!

But different the time we see,
Since Jesus walked in Galilee,
And did poor fishermen prepare
His holy Gospel to declare.

Nor purse nor scrip He bade them take,
But preach the Gospel for His sake,
And not a single word did say
Of house, or glebe, or pound a day.

Mr. Byles omits to say how Hawker met the criticism ;
but no doubt with vigour.



OUR Jubilee bonfire was on a sandy hill overlooking the Weald of Kent. Immediately below it is the span of country between Penshurst and Edenbridge; due south is the forest ridge of Sussex, and in clear weather, here and there in the

The Hilltop

dips, the Lewes and Brighton Downs show through, blue and indistinct. Far in the west Leith Hill is visible, and to the remotest east the green Weald stretches. South-east, ancient Saxonbury rises cone-like from the flat. North of us are downs, two or three miles away, and then sky, only sky. On the other side of them, twenty miles off, is London.

So much for the position. Our fire was built on Monday, and guarded jealously night and day. The heart of it was three tar-barrels, and around these were faggots of brushwood, twenty feet high, terminating in a point. A little passage led into the centre of the fire, into which, just before lighting, paraffin was dashed. From a few yards' distance the fire resembled a wigwam. You expected some wild man of the woods to emerge on hands and knees and offer a peace-pipe. So pacific and gentle an air did the pile wear, that in the afternoon I saw a hedge-sparrow which contemplated another brood prospecting for a good building-site among the twigs.

The word had gone round that all fires were to be lit at ten o'clock, and by half-past nine our party was complete: a few peasantry, a farmer or two, and the gentry. The gentry were to light the fire. We stood there waiting. The hot sun that blazed

Waiting

throughout yesterday had baked the earth till it groaned, and now, in the cool of the evening, it was sighing its relief. Rich scents hung above the ground like mists; a breath of honeysuckle here, of sweetbriar there, of bracken everywhere. Cautious sounds and rustlings came from the neighbouring wood. Meanwhile, at various points in the Weald the dusk—there was no real darkness—was being torn and jagged by rockets. They rushed up into the night and burst into showers of stars. We could hear nothing, we could only picture to ourselves the little crowds at each spot, and feel envious that no fireworks were ours to beguile the waiting. Being British, we talked but little, merely exclaiming as the distant rockets burst, and now and then asking the time. The hands of the watch crawled on. A few jokes circulated. One farmer hoped as how the fire was insured. Somebody said he suspected arson was abroad. Probably we all thought of the other little bands of impatient fire-worshippers waiting just as we were, watch in hand, all over the country. There is not often such unanimity! Five minutes more. In five minutes this land would be alight; thousands of fires would leap into life at the same instant.

Ten o'Clock

Meanwhile stragglers arrived, and the dusk was continually wounded and gashed by sporadic rockets.

Ten o'clock! The young man in knickerbockers, who is the pilot of the gentry, bends over the opening and strikes a match. There is silence and suspense. A crackling sound follows, that terrible crackling which no one who has witnessed a fire can ever forget, and a silver flame is seen struggling inside the wigwam. It tears shrieking at the sides, and then for a while is lost to sight, although we can hear it fighting to be free. Meanwhile, through crevices in the walls, great fat rolls of dingy grey smoke are escaping silently, furtively, and gliding away over the brake-fern like thieves. I have never seen such smoke: so heavy, and guilty, and fat. It crawled from the fire like a monstrous reptile. And then suddenly the flame won its way out and consumed the tail of the beast! And up to heaven the tongues climbed, each raging to be there first, and the surrounding pine trees stood out as in a stereoscope. Wild flutterings were heard as birds left their roosts in terror, and a cock-pheasant called persistently in alarm close by. The flames poured up. We could now see for the first time

The Bonfire

who was present on the scene, for no one can preserve an incognito in the presence of a Jubilee bonfire.

And then, turning from our own blaze to the Weald below and the distant hills, we saw the answering beacons. The country was gemmed with points of orange and red fire: England had become the setting of myriad jewels—of flaming diamonds! Wherever we turned our eyes, there were the burning symbols of the country's joy. For a moment the Weald was transformed to a black, sombre ocean, with ships riding at anchor. It resembled nothing so much save that the lights gave no reflection. The fires from the distance at which we stood burned each to itself; there was no glowing aura; not a yard of surrounding scenery borrowed and extended their light. The suddenness with which they sprang into being was wonderful, almost incredible, especially to anyone well acquainted with the impenetrable darkness of these miles of silent Weald at night. We counted sixty fires in a few minutes.

No simile can do justice to the sight. It was unique, indescribable. For the first time, it was given us to see what Macaulay described so finely

Armada Beacons

in his fragment of verse on the Armada, only whereas his fires flashed the tidings of war from hill to hill, ours were the signs of peace and goodwill. Macaulay wrote—

Night sank upon the dusky beach, and on the purple sea,
Such night in England ne'er had been, nor e'er again shall
be.

From Eddystone to Berwick bounds, from Lynn to Milford
Bay,

That time of slumber was as bright and busy as the day.

Southward from Surrey's pleasant hills flew those bright
couriers forth ;

High on bleak Hampstead's swarthy moor they started for
the north ;

And on, and on, without a pause, untired they bounded
still :

All night from tower to tower they sprang ; they sprang
from hill to hill :

Till the proud Peak unfurled the flag o'er Darwin's rocky
dales,

Till like volcanoes flared to heaven the stormy hills of Wales.

Last night's bonfires were not replenished. They were built to ignite at once, burn bravely and tempestuously for a few minutes only. By eleven o'clock many of them were invisible, and by twelve our own was merely heat and smoke.

“Encouragement”

Encouragement



ENCOURAGEMENT? Nay, I have none.

Indeed, the future looms so drear,

I almost wish the drama done—

Yet, if you can, find comfort here :

That though of all the human race

Dismay and pain the portion are,

To other worlds that spin in space

Our world looks just a shining star.

The Town Week

IT is odd that "Mondayish" is the only word which the days of the week have given us; since Monday is not alone in possessing a positive and peculiar character. Why not "Tuesdayish" or "Wednesdayish"? Each word would convey as much meaning to me, "Tuesdayish" in particular, for Monday's cardinal and reprehensible error of beginning the business week seems to me almost a virtue compared with Tuesday's utter flatness. To begin a new week is no fault at all, although tradition has branded it as one. To begin is a noble accomplishment; but to continue dully, to be the tame follower of a courageous beginner, to be the second day in a week of action, as in Tuesday's case—that is deplorable, if you like.

Monday can be flat enough, but in a different way

Flat Tuesday

from Tuesday. Monday is flat because one has been idling, perhaps unconsciously absorbing notions of living like the lilies ; because so many days must pass before the week ends ; because yesterday is no more. But Tuesday has the sheer essential flatness of nonentity ; Tuesday is nothing. If you would know how absolutely nothing it is, go to a week-end hotel at, say Brighton, and stay on after the Saturday-to-Monday population has flitted. On Tuesday you touch the depths. So does the menu—no *chef* ever exerted himself for a Tuesday guest. Tuesday also is very difficult to spell, many otherwise cultured ladies putting the *e* before the *u* ; and why not ? What right has Teusday to any preference ?

With all its faults, Monday has a positive character. Monday brings a feeling of revolt ; Tuesday, the base craven, reconciles us to the machine. I am not surprised that the recent American revivalists held no meetings on Mondays. It was a mark of their astuteness ; they knew that the wear and tear of overcoming the Monday feeling of the greater part of their audience would exhaust them before their magnetism began to have play ; while a similarly stubborn difficulty would confront them in the remaining portion sunk in apathy by the thought that to-morrow would be Tuesday. It

Wednesday

is this presage of certain tedium which has robbed Monday evening of its "glittering star." Yet since nothing so becomes a flat day as the death of it, Tuesday evening's glittering star (it is Wordsworth's phrase) is of the brightest—for is not the dreary day nearly done, and is not to-morrow Wednesday the bland?

With Wednesday, the week stirs itself, turns over, begins to wake. There are matinées on Wednesday; on Wednesday some of the more genial weekly papers come out. The very word has a good honest round air—Wednesday. Things, adventures, might happen very naturally on Wednesday; but that nothing ever happened on a Tuesday I am convinced. In summer Wednesday has often close finishes at Lord's, and it is a day on which one's friends are pretty sure to be accessible. On Monday they may not have returned from the country; on Friday they have begun to go out of town again; but on Wednesday they are here, at home—are solid. I am sure it is my favourite day.

(Even politicians, so slow as a rule to recognise the kindlier, more generous, side of life, realised for many years that Wednesday was a day on which they had no right to conduct their acrimonious business for more than an hour or so. Much of the failure of the last Government may be traced to their atheistical

Thursday and Friday

decision no longer to remember Wednesday to keep it holy.)

On Thursday the week falls back a little ; the stirring of Wednesday is forgotten ; there is a return to the folding of the hands. I am not sure that Thursday has not become the real day of rest. That it is a good honest day is the most that can be said for it. It is certainly not Thor's day any longer—if my reading of the character of the blacksmith-god is true. There is nothing strong and downright and fine about it. Compared with Tuesday's small beer, Thursday is almost champagne ; but none the less they are related. One can group them together. If I were a business man, I should, I am certain, sell my shares at a loss on Monday and at a profit on Wednesday and Friday, but on Tuesday and Thursday I should get for them exactly what I gave.

I group Friday with Wednesday as a day that can be friendly to me, but it has not Wednesday's quality. Wednesday is calm, assured, urbane ; Friday allows itself to be a little flurried and excited. Wednesday stands alone ; Friday to some extent throws in its lot with Saturday. Friday is too busy. Too many papers come out, too many bags are packed, on Friday. But herein, of course, is some of its virtue: it is the

Saturday

beginning of the end, the forerunner of Saturday and Sunday. If anticipation, as the moralists say, is better than the realisation, Friday is perhaps the best day of the week, for one spends much of it in thinking of the morrow and what of good it should bring forth. Friday's greatest merit is perhaps that it paves the way to Saturday and the cessation of work. That it ever was really unlucky I greatly doubt.

And so we come to Saturday and Sunday. But here the analyst falters, for Saturday and Sunday pass from the region of definable days. Monday and Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday and Friday, these are days with a character fixed more or less for all. But Saturday and Sunday are what we individually make of them. In one family they are friends, associates; in another as ill-assorted as Socrates and Xantippe. For most of us Saturday is not exactly a day at all, it is a collection of hours, part work, part pleasure, and all restlessness. It is a day that we plan for, and therefore it is often a failure. I have no distinct and unvarying impression of Saturday, except that trains are full and late and shops shut too early.

Sunday even more than Saturday is different as people are different. To the godly it is a day of low

Sunday

tones, its minutes go by muffled ; to the children of the godly it is eternity. To the ungodly it is a day jeopardised by an interest in barometers that is almost too poignant. To one man it is an interruption of the week ; to another it is the week itself, and all the rest of the days are but preparations for it. One cannot analyse Saturday and Sunday.

But Monday? There we are on solid ground again. Monday—but I have discussed Monday already : that is one of its principal characteristics, that it is always coming round again, pretending to be new. It is always the same in reality.

A Word on Toast



IF bread is the staff of life, toast is its clouded cane. The cheapest of the luxuries, and withal one of the most exquisite and enduring, to set but a low value upon toast is to expose one's deficiency in right appreciation.

"To make dry toast properly," says the admirable Mrs. Beeton, "a great deal of attention is required; much more, indeed, than people generally suppose. Never use new bread for making any kind of toast, as it renders it heavy, and, besides, is very extravagant." A loaf one day old is the best material. Mrs. Beeton continues: "Dry toast should be more gradually made than buttered toast, as its great beauty consists in its crispness, and this cannot be attained unless the process is slow, and the bread is allowed gradually to colour." Dry toast, one might add, should be thin

When Toasters Disagree

as well as crisp. It should be eaten within, at the most, ten minutes of leaving the fire. While awaiting its turn on the table, each piece of toast should stand alone, on no account being laid flat or placed so close to another piece that it touches. Stale toast, or toast from which the crispness has, as it were, thawed away, is abomination. It is limp, and tough, and indigent. Moreover, the mastication of it makes no sound. Now the noise from good toast should reverberate in the head like the thunder of July.

The *Spectator*, which has ever been an exponent of the art of living, laid down, more than thirty years ago, rules concerning toast. "True toast," it then said (or, to be exact, the late Mr. R. H. Hutton then said), "is classical—severe. . . . Toast, we need not say, should be *thin*, crisp, wafer-like, as well as embrowned, fresh and hot. Thick toast with solid fleshy bread between the embrowned surfaces is a gross and plebeian solecism ; for the true intention of toast, its meaning or *raison d'être*, is to extinguish the foody, solid taste which belongs to bread, and to supply in its place crisp, light, fragrant, evanescent, spiritualised chips of fare, the mere scent and sound of which suggest the crisp, pleasant, light chat of easy morning or evening conversation." The *Spectator's*

Amateur Cooks

enthusiasm is noble, but one begs to differ slightly. Dogmatist replying to dogmatist would contest the point touching the thoroughness of the toasting process. Toast should *not* be wafer-like, nor crisp *throughout*. On the contrary, it should be cut just thick enough to leave in its very inward midst the merest tissue of soft bread, if only by way of compliment to the butter spread upon it, which thereby gains in flavour. Toast, when it is a "chip," dry enough to snap, is too dry. This central layer of soft bread lends it unity and preserves enough moisture to influence the whole. When the original bread intervening between the toasted surfaces is more than a mere hint, then indeed has the toaster failed with ignominy. "That," as the *Spectator* says, "is an anomaly, like dancing in thin boots surmounted with heavy gaiters."

Toast is one of the few delicacies that can be made better by the amateur than the professional, and as well by a man as by a woman. Cooks treat toast perfunctorily: it does not interest them. Indeed, toast might well be kept strictly to amateur ambition. For several reasons: one being that its fragrance is pleasant in a sitting-room; another, that making it is an agreeable diversion; and a third, that whereas bad toast produced in the kitchen leads to annoyance and

Toasting Forks

irritation, bad toast produced by a guest or a member of the family makes for mock abuse, sham penitence, and good humour.

Just as every man believes himself to be excelled by no one in arousing a dying fire, so does every man believe himself to be the finest hand in the world at making toast. That the first conspicuous failure as a maker of toast was Alfred the Great is the one glowing historical fact which is common to all grades of intellect. It is as familiar to the night-school pupil in Whitechapel as it was to the late Professor Freeman. To burn toast is still a prevalent delinquency: there are some absent-minded creatures who are always to be caught resting the bread against the bars. Blackened toast is not nice; but compared with the sin of smoking it, blackening toast is a bagatelle. Burnt toast can be scraped and rendered passable, but by no means can toast be cleansed of smoke.

The best toast is made with a toasting-fork, and the good, the complete, toaster is known by the way in which he places the bread upon the prongs.¹ An

¹ Toasting-forks have other uses. One of these is illustrated in a letter of Charles Dickens to the late Professor Felton, his American friend. Dickens wrote: "I dreamed that somebody was dead. It was a private gentleman, and a particular

Dickens's Dream

immature, illogical toaster affixes it at a right angle and confronts the fire squarely. This is unwise, since there follows equatorial heat. The scientific toaster arranges the bread so that he is enabled to sit out of the line of heat and yet present the full surface to the bars. When the toasting-fork is missing, or already in use, a table fork is sometimes employed. After toasting with a table fork for a minute or so, one's hand knows exactly how Tom Brown must have felt when Bully Flashman held him to the fire.¹

friend; and I was greatly overcome when the news was broken to me (very delicately) by a gentleman in a cocked hat, top boots, and a sheet. Nothing else. 'Good God!' I said, 'is he dead?' 'He is as dead, sir,' rejoined the gentleman, 'as a door-nail. But we must all die, Mr. Dickens, sooner or later, my dear sir.' 'Ah!' I said, 'yes, to be sure. Very true. But what did he die of?' The gentleman burst into a flood of tears, and said, in a voice broken by emotion, 'He christened his youngest child, sir, with a toasting-fork!'"

¹ There is in English literature, by the way, a much earlier reference to the same practice. The first eclogue of another Browne—William Browne, author of "The Shepherd's Pipe"—which is otherwise a simple, idyllic poem, contains this cannibalistic passage:—

"I will sing what I did heere
Long ago in Janiveere,
Of a skilful aged sire,
As we tosted by the fire."

The Art of Travel

In some houses a toasting apparatus is in use, but toast thus prepared lacks individuality. It may, perhaps, be embrowned more evenly, but the human element is lacking. In restaurants and clubs toast is always prepared in a rack, and in spite of the means employed, clubs have always good toast. Some club-men leave wife and child and home, and seek Pall Mall, less for the company, the whist, or the cellar, than for the toast to be obtained there, such is its fascination. Hotels, too, have usually good toast, but the supply is seldom sufficient: hence the order of an experienced traveller when breakfasting at an inn: "Waiter, be perpetually bringing up fresh toast." The best accompaniment to toast is butter, which should not be spread over the piece, but applied to each mouthful in turn. Toast elicits the essential virtues of butter more successfully even than bread; so much so, that one might almost say that violence is committed when marmalade is allied to it, or meat paste.

To hot-buttered toast butter is absolutely the only accompaniment; the more butter the better. And here the breach widens between the *Spectator* and a writer who would fain quarrel with no one. "It is impossible," thunders the Wellington Street arbiter,

Mrs. Gamp's Difficulty

"to conceive a more horrible degradation of a great idea than buttered toast is of toast. Every great quality of toast is turned into its opposite and contradictory in buttered toast—lightness into heaviness, crispness into swashy flabbiness, fragrance into a sort of brooding butter-malaria, a Pontine marsh of butter. . . . Buttered toast is the Pickwick's fat-boy of victuals." True. But, granting all this, does not a singularly seductive food remain? Toast and buttered toast are as distinct as the race-horse and the cart-horse; and both alike are admirable, each in its own way.

Different persons favour different shapes in hot-buttered toast. Some cut triangular pieces, others square; some divide the slice into four, others into two. This is a matter of personal predilection, but positive sin is committed when the crusts are not cut off. "Likeways, a few rounds o' buttered toast," said Mrs. Gamp, giving orders for tea to Jonas Chuzzlewit's servant, "first cuttin' off the crusts, in consequence of tender teeth, and not too many of 'em; which Gamp himself, Mrs. Chuzzlewit, at one blow, being in liquor, struck out four, two single and two double, as was took by Mrs. Harris for a keepsake, and is carried in her pocket at this present hour, along with two cramp-

The Butter

bones, a bit o' ginger, and a grater like a blessed infant's shoe in tin, with a little heel to put the nutmeg in." It is, says Alexis Soyer, wicked to cut through half a dozen buttered slices at once, because when that is done the butter is squeezed from the upper pieces, while the lowest one is swimming in it. Among the initiated (or, as the *Spectator* would have it, the vulgar) there is, under these circumstances, a struggle for the bottom piece. Each slice should, on the contrary, be cut separately and laid lightly on the dish.

Buttered toast should be thicker than cold toast, and the butter should drench. It thus becomes gloriously indigestible: as a dyspeptic influence removed but one degree from the muffin. It is the crumpet, however, that holds the historical record. "One night," said Mr. Weller, "he was took very ill; sends for a doctor; doctor comes in a green fly, with a kind o' Robinson Crusoe set o' steps, as he could let down ven he got out, and pull up arter him ven he got in, to perwent the necessity o' the coachman's gettin' down, and thereby undeceivin' the public by lettin' 'em see that it vos only a livery coat he'd got on, and not the trousers to match. "Wot's the matter?" says the doctor. "Wery ill," says the patient.

Crumpets

"Wot have you been a eatin' on?" says the doctor
"Roast weal," says the patient. "Wot's the last thing
you dewoured?" says the doctor. "Crumpets," says
the patient. "That's it," says the doctor. "I'll send
you a box of pills directly, and don't you never take
no more of 'em," he says. "No more o' wot?" says
the patient—"Pills?" "No; crumpets," says the
doctor. "Wy!" says the patient, starting up in bed;
"I've eat four crumpets ev'ry night for fifteen year,
on principle." "Well, then, you'd better leave 'em off,
on principle," says the doctor. "Crumpets is whole-
some, sir," says the patient. "Crumpets is *not* whole-
some, sir," says the doctor, very fierce. "But they're
so cheap," says the patient, comin' down a little, "and
so wery fillin' at the price." "They'd be dear to you
at any price; dear if you wos paid to eat 'em," says
the doctor. "Four crumpets a night," he says, "vill
do your business in six months!" The patient looks
him full in the face, and turns it over in his mind for
a long time, and at last he says, "Are you sure o' that
'ere, sir?" "I'll stake my professional reputation on
it," says the doctor. "How many crumpets at a
sittin', do you think, 'ud kill me off at once?" says the
patient. "I don't know," says the doctor. "Do you
think half a crown's wurth 'ud do it?" says the patient.

Death on Principle

"I think it might," says the doctor. "Three shillin's vurth 'ud be sure to do it, I s'pose?" says the patient.

"Certainly," says the doctor. "Wery good," says the patient; "good-night." Next mornin' he gets up, has a fire lit, orders in three shillin's vurth o' crumpets, toasts 'em all, eats 'em all, and blows his brains out.'

"'What did he do that for?' inquired Mr. Pickwick abruptly; for he was considerably startled by this tragical termination of the narrative.

"'Wot did he do it for, sir?' reiterated Sam. 'Vy, in support of his great principle that crumpets wos wholesome, and to show that he couldn't be put out of his way for nobody!'"

The most famous hot-buttered toast-house in the world was "Tyson's Restaurant" in Rook Street, Manchester, which still flourishes, but is no longer animated by the crisp individuality of its founder, old Tom Tyson, as he was known. Tyson, a born autocrat, knew that in their heart of hearts Britons, for all their Rule-Britannia sentiments, like to be slave-driven. So he established a restaurant wherein he, an inflexible tyrant, might enforce laws of his own making and win riches by this very enforcement. He provided only chops, steaks, and Cumberland ham, and served with them, instead of vegetables,

Tyson's Toast

hot-buttered toast or bread. Most of his customers took toast. People who asked for potatoes were unceremoniously told that they should have brought their own. Everyone who ate at Tyson's was compelled also to drink. Ale, stout, coffee, and tea were the only liquids. A customer asking for water was referred to the "teetotal shop next door."

A host of good stories are told of Tyson. He dominated the place in his shirt-sleeves, and nothing escaped his vigilant eye. His duty to a customer, as he conceived it, was done when good food had been laid promptly before him; after that the customer's duty to the master of the restaurant began. Reading was not permitted, at least in the middle of the day, nor grumbling, nor a protracted sitting, nor smoking. Tyson's strength was the excellence of his wares, his cheapness, and his business-like despatch, and knowing this he played the Kaiser to the top of his bent. A young man once calling, "Waiter, bring me a steak at once," was amazed to find a raw steak clapped on the table before him. To his expression of disgust came the reply, "You can't expect meat to be cooked if you want it at once." Another customer had the temerity to complain that his steak was tough. A considerable space of time elapsed

Tyson's Tyranny

before he came again, but Tyson, who forgot nothing, was waiting for him. The grumbler called for a steak. "Steaks are tough," was the reply. "Then I'll have a chop." "Chops are tough." "Then what can I have?" "Nothing. If you can't be satisfied with food that pleases other people you can go somewhere else." A customer daring so much as to glance at a letter from his pocket was curtly informed that "this is not a library." A customer who had exceeded his welcome was bidden to go. To the few who complained of incivility, Tyson's reply was that he served his civility with his chops and steaks. A branch of Tyson's was opened in London, near St. Paul's, but, possibly through lack of its originator's truculent yet attractive presence, it soon ceased to be.

Yet there is room for toast-houses. Who knows but that the establishment of a good toast-house might not restore the days of wit? In course of time, if the toast-house became as notable as Will's Coffee-house of old, another John Dryden or Dr. Johnson might be forthcoming to dominate it; and we need another Dr. Johnson. The experiment, at any rate, might be tried.

Toast is more than a delicacy: it is a friend, a sickroom ally. Toast-and-water is cooling as the

Nomenclature

wind of the morning across fields of dew, and it is toast, swimming in beef tea, that constitutes the first solid food which a patient may take. In the nursery and at school toast is a recognised concomitant of an invalid's tea, and many a boy has malingered to achieve it. Otherwise schoolboys have few opportunities of tasting this luxury, toast made over a gas-jet being a very inferior article. A gas-jet, however, has been known to embrown cheese very pleasantly, and here one might put a question that for too long has been a cause of vexation: Why is "Toasted Cheese" a less honourable nickname than "Candle Ends"? It will be remembered by students of *The Hunting of the Snark*, that the baker, having no fixed name, was called by his intimate friends Candle Ends, and by his enemies Toasted Cheese. To the ordinary non-Carrollian mind it would seem that more of a compliment, more of affection, was carried by the name chosen by the baker's enemies.

Concerning Breakfast

HOUSES where everyone is punctual for breakfast are not good to stay in: the virtues so flourish there. A little laxity in the morning is humanising. For dinner, punctuality by all means, punctuality severely to the minute; but for breakfast let there be liberty to tarry on the way. To be late for breakfast is so natural an act that instinctively one feels it to be right. There is a kind of half-wakeful sleep following the precarious folding of the hands to which the Comfortable resort when they are first called, that is more precious than all the deep somnolence of the night. The poet knew. How runs his wisdom?—

“When the Morning riseth red,
Rise not thou, but keep thy Bed;
When the Dawn is dull and grey,
Sleep is still the better way.

The Percys' Breakfast

Beasts are up betimes? But then
They are Beasts, and we are men."

And—

"Morning Sleep avoideth Broll,
Wasteth not in greedy Toil,
Doth not suffer Care or Grief,
Giveth aching Bones relief.
Of all the Crimes beneath the Sun,
Say, Which in morning Sleep was done?"

Yet breakfast in bed is not the joy some persons would have us think it. There are crumbs.

The breakfast appetite varies strangely. Some persons are content with a cup of coffee and a piece of toast; others make it the most determined meal of the day. Once it was formidable indeed. In Sir John Hawkins's *History of Music* is quoted a sixteenth-century manuscript belonging to the House of Northumberland, which gives the breakfast arrangements of the Percy family both for Lent and for flesh days; and oh, how some of us have fallen away in trencher work! Here is the simple Northumbrian scheme: "Breakfast for my Lord and Lady during Lent—First, a loaf of bread in trenchers, 2 manchets [a manchet was a small loaf of white bread], a quart of beer, a quart of wine, 2 pieces of salt fish, 6 baconn'd herring,

Outlaws and Anglers

4 white herring, or a dish of sprats. Breakfast for my Lord Percy and Master Thomas Percy—Item, half a loaf of household bread, a manchet, a bottle of beer, a dish of butter, and a piece of salt fish, a dish of sprats, or three white herring. Breakfast for the nursery, for my Lady Margaret and Master Ingeram Percy—Item, a manchet, a quart of beer [this for the nursery !], a dish of butter, a piece of salt fish, a dish of sprats, or three white herring." At ordinary times my Lord and Lady fared thus: "First, a loaf of bread in trenchers, 2 manchets, a quart of beer, a quart of wine, half a chine of mutton, or else a chine of beef boiled;" Lord Percy and Master Thomas Percy disposed of "half a loaf of household bread, a manchet, 1 bottle of beer, a cheeking, or else 3 mutton bones boiled;" while to the thirsty nursery went "a manchet, 1 quart of beer, and three mutton bones boiled.'

In Hall's *Seventh Year of King Henry VIII.* we find what constituted the breakfast of outlaws. "Then sayde Robyn Hood, Sir, outlawes brekefaste is venyson, and therefore you must be content with suche fare as we use. Then the Kyng and Quene sate downe, and were served with venyson and wyne by Robyn Hood and hys men, to theyre great conten-

Calverley's Omission

tacion." "Contentacion" is a splendid word; it might be reserved for red-letter breakfasts. Izaak Walton and his honest scholar made brave breakfast off a piece of powdered beef and a radish or two, as they sat beneath a sycamore. Considering that this was at nine o'clock and they began fishing soon after five, they deserved it. "All excellent good," said the honest scholar as he wiped his mouth, "and my stomach excellent good too." Walton's collaborator, Master Charles Cotton, was less indulgent. "My diet," he said, "is always one glass [of ale] so soon as I am dressed, and no more till dinner," which, compared with the excesses of the Percy children, is asceticism itself. Viator, in the same work, took even less. "I will light a pipe," he said, "for that is commonly my breakfast too." Viator, however, was misguided. Had he eaten breakfast first and lighted his pipe after, his lot would have been more enviable. No pipe is so gracious as that which follows breakfast. Calverley sinned when he omitted this season from his ode to tobacco. "Sweet when they've cleared away lunch," he sings. True; but sweeter, nay, sweetest, when they are clearing away breakfast.

To the child breakfast means bread and milk, or

A Child's Guide

porridge, and the beginning of another day. To me it meant this and nothing more until at an early age a reading-book was embarked upon, which consisted of a long dialogue between father and children concerning the nature and the source of the articles upon the breakfast table. The conversation, which was continued through several breakfasts, proceeded in the manner of the catechism. One child asked where coffee came from, and papa replied that it came from Arabia. Another was struck by the whiteness of the salt, and said so. Papa at once explained the whiteness of the salt and passed easily to a lecture on salt-mining. The aim of the book was to show that the antipodal peoples of the earth meet at the breakfast table; that energy must be expended in both hemispheres before Henry and Susan can enjoy their bread and treacle. This reading-book was epoch-making. Henceforward breakfast was an educative meal; and I have only quite lately lost the feeling that at any moment a searching question might be asked concerning the origin and manufacture of everything eaten. From the children's books of to-day, it might be noted, the well-informed parent is departing.

Oatmeal marks not only the child's breakfast, it is

Oats : Quaker and Wild

the favourite food of Edinburgh Reviewers. Thus do extremes meet. It is best with cream, which indeed might be defined, after a well-known model, as the stuff which makes porridge insipid if you eat it without it. If the hoardings are to be believed, the form of porridge now most in vogue is of Quaker origin. Quaker oats, one supposes, should be the very anti-thesis of wild oats. Porridge—homely, honest fare though it be—is the cause of more strife than any other dish. The great salt-*versus*-sugar battle is eternally waged above it; for some take salt and some sugar, and they that take salt are the scorn of those that take sugar, and they that take sugar are despised of those that take salt. Quakers being a pacific folk, their oats should have stopped this warfare.

The egg, as egg, belongs properly to the breakfast table, in spite of the beautiful anthropomorphic story (which too many parents claim to have participated in) of the little girl who asked her mother what God has for dinner. "God," said her mother, "has no dinner." The little girl was for a moment silent, thoughtful, sad. Then she brightened: "Oh, I suppose He has an egg with His tea." In a poem in praise of frugality, his Holiness Pope Leo XIII.

Mustard and Cress

laid down this rule (which reached English readers *viâ* Mr. Andrew Lang)—

“ Fresh be thine eggs, hard-boiled, or nearly raw,
Or deftly poached, or simply served *au plat*;
‘There’s wit in poaching eggs,’ the proverb says,
And you may do them in a hundred ways.”

Buttered, they give, perhaps, most “contentacion.”

Personally, I like to begin the day’s eating with watercress. It is so sharp and awakening. Indeed, to show to fullest advantage, to scintillate as Nature intended it to, it is at breakfast that watercress must be eaten, newly picked, with salt and bread-and-butter. The bread must be white and new, and the butter mild and fresh. The ecstasy of the surprise of watercress to the palate and tongue! The lively, pricking sensation of the mustard-like sharpness, the fragrance of the sap, and, above all, the cleanness, the good-humoured, bright cleanness of the herb! Watercress, if it tastes of anything, tastes of early morning in spring. It is eloquent of the charm of its native environment. Nothing else—lettuce, radishes, cucumber, land cress, or celery—speaks or sings to the eater, as watercress does, of cool streams and overhanging banks and lush herbage. The water-

Many Marmalades

gress has for neighbours the water-lily, the marsh marigold, and the forget-me-not. The spirit of the rivulet abides in its heart.

No matter of what the breakfast consists, marmalade is the coping-stone of the meal. Without marmalade the finest breakfast is incomplete, a broken arc. Only with marmalade can it be a perfect round. Everyone's home-made marmalade is notoriously the best ; but where the commercially-manufactured article is used opinions differ. Her Most Gracious Majesty Queen Victoria (it is stated so on the pot) preferred a viscous variety which is impossible to Oxford men bred on Cooper's. Tess of the D'Urbervilles, it will be remembered, favoured Keelwell's ; or, at any rate, it was this maker who assisted in the embellishment of little Sorrow's grave. The Universities are nobly loyal to marmalade. At Cambridge there is a saying that no man can pass his Little-go until he has consumed his own weight in it, while Oxford first called it Squish. The attitude of women to marmalade has never been quite sound. True, they make it excellently, but afterwards their association with it is one lamentable retrogression. They spread it over pastry ; they do not particularly desire it at breakfast ;

Breakfast Talk

and (worst) they decant it into glass dishes and fancy jars.

Where there is no marmalade, shift may be made with honey or jam ; and treacle is not entirely out of favour, although the enterprise of Bonnie Dundee has dealt it so hard a blow that you may fare far in your quest of the golden syrup. The great charm of treacle is in its transit from the pot to the plate ; with no other liquid, except the exquisite thin honey of Switzerland, is it possible to trace one's autograph. Most of us as children saw our names writ in treacle.

Breakfast is a meal at which one becomes apiarian. Everything being on the table, or on the sideboard, one can sip, bee-like, where one will ; hence, perhaps, the absence of conversation at breakfast. At dinner, where formality is preserved, where one progresses artistically and with dignity towards repletion, conversation is fostered ; at breakfast there is merely chatter, sporadic and trivial ; scraps from letters, puns, dreams, and the description of strange noises heard in the night. Dreams told at breakfast should be accepted with reservations, for few persons are strong enough to tell them faithfully. Yet, although breakfast does little either for the conversationalist or the

Breakfast Guests

gourmet, it is often the merriest and freshest of the day's meals. The joy of it is new every morning. Breakfast is the beginning of another day: lunch and dinner are but continuations; and to those glad natures which are reinvigorated and heartened by every sunrise, breakfast is a time for high spirits. High spirits, however, must not be confounded with brilliance. Only dull people, said a character in a recent comedy, are brilliant at breakfast; which is a truth, in spite of the works of Dr. Holmes and the records which have come down to us of the scintillating breakfast-parties given by Samuel Rogers and Lord Holland. But the table which in those days was set in a roar approximated more nearly to the luncheon-table than the breakfast-table as we understand it. Breakfast-parties are indeed practically obsolete.¹ At the ordinary breakfast-table there

¹ The following remark of Macaulay to Mrs. Stowe thus loses point, and this point is not restored by reading lunch for breakfast, for the old breakfast does not quite take the place of modern lunch: "You invite a man to dinner because you *must* invite him; because you are acquainted with his grandfather, or it is proper you should; but you invite a man to breakfast because you want to see *him*. You may be sure, if you are invited to breakfast, there is something agreeable about you.

Wit

is little wit. One reason is the early hour—wit is for the day's decline ; another is discontent—bed is not yet forgotten, nor the breakfast-gong forgiven, and wit requires a mind at ease.

Footpaths and Walking-Sticks

AFTER all, choosing a walking-stick is a serious business. A cane can be selected lightly enough, for a cane is a mere town acquaintance ; but a walking-stick is a country friend, a roadside companion, a support, a solace, perhaps a defender. Therefore it behoves one to be careful in deciding. Moreover, a walking-stick should endure : one does not want to change it before the necessary end ; and a good walking-stick is one of the things of which one never tires but grows ever more fond, familiarity breeding no contempt, nothing but increased satisfaction. Now a cane—a cane may be an affair of caprice—you may have a dozen and alternate them like neck-ties ; but a walking-stick is unalterable. You stand by him and he stands by you ; he is, as I have said, your friend.

The Obtuse Angle

Personally, I incline to a cherry. I have carried my present cherry for a good five years, and his predecessor (broken at stump cricket) was a cherry too. This is the best I have yet owned, because it fulfils the requirements. That is to say, it is strong and leanable upon, it tapers, and its handle, which of course is natural, is set at a slightly obtuse angle. I was taught the last important qualification by the finest foot-traveller in Sussex, a man (he is now no more) who knew every inch of that inaccessible and alluring county, and had known it since he was a boy. He cut his own sticks, preferring ground ash, and since he could not find it in his heart to pass a likely one by when it caught his eye as he swung through a copse, his sumptuary stock was immense. All had obtuse-angled handles. The reason is that for downhill work (when a stick is most useful) the support for the hand is the fullest. All also had very large handles, for the same reason. A little while ago I had a valuable corroboration of this theory from another old man, whom I found cutting the grass on a grave in the churchyard. Beside him lay a crutch and a walking-stick with a handle—obtuse-angled—of enormous size. "I've had that stick many a year," he said. "The handle?"

Ground Ash

Oh yes, he is a big one ; but if he hadn't been big he wouldn't have been any good to me, crippled as I am." Your old countryman makes no mistakes in such matters.

In real walking a handle of this character is imperative. Not that a right-angled handle is an obstacle, but try the other for a while and you will see its comfort and utility. A crook is useless save as a hook for berries and nuts, and a knob contracts the hand. One of the sad things is that holly, that superb wood, cannot grow a good handle, nor can you often find a blackthorn that succeeds in doing so. Good cherry sticks are rare ; for the most part they lack balance. Hazels are light and strong, but their handles are cross-grained and are therefore put out of court. The ground ash, perhaps, comes oftenest to the point of satisfaction.

Where, one wonders, are the old walking-sticks? Thomas Carlyle's is on the wall of his house in Cheyne Row ; but where are George Borrow's sticks? He must have had noble fellows. Time should have no power over a stick lying at ease ; the sticks of great men should last for ever in a museum. I think I must begin to collect them. Where is that wonderful stick of Coleridge's, which, when a young man,

S. T. C.'s Loss

walking in Wales, he lost, and advertised for so piquantly? This is how the notice, which was called through the town by the crier, was couched—"Missing from the Bee Inn, Abergele, a curious walking-stick. On one side it displays the head of an eagle, the eyes of which represent rising suns, and the ears Turkish crescent; on the other side is the portrait of the owner in woodwork. Beneath the head of the eagle is a Welsh wig, and around the neck of the stick is a Queen Elizabeth's ruff in tin. All down it waves the line of beauty in very ugly carving. If any gentleman (or lady) has fallen in love with the above-described stick, and secretly carried off the same, he (or she) is hereby earnestly admonished to conquer a passion the continuance of which must prove fatal to his (or her) honesty. And if the said stick has slipped into such gentleman's (or lady's) hand through inadvertence, he (or she) is required to rectify the mistake with all convenient speed. God save the King." Coleridge recovered the stick from the old gentleman who had innocently taken it, and who, grasping it firmly, returned to the inn in confusion, followed by half the town. The stick, it seems, was, properly speaking, a staff, such as patriarchs carry in old Bible prints, for it measured five feet. For hill-work these

An Ideal of Happiness

staves are better than any walking-stick of ordinary length ; they pull one upwards. Coleridge bought it from a countryman, and his sudden affection for it, he says in a letter, "mellowed into settled friendship." That is as it should be with all good sticks ; we should feel for them (and they for us) settled friendship.

To have one of these good sticks, nothing to do, no cares, no thought for the morrow, a good pair of boots, a sufficient purse, a light knapsack, a weather-proof coat, and to be in a heathery country with no more purpose in life than to follow whatever footpaths one will until come night and the inn—that is no bad state. Indeed, it is an ideal of happiness. For the last couple of weeks in April or the first in May one could be as happy thus employed (or unemployed) as any way you could suggest. Later, the skies are not so interesting, having too much blue and too little cloud ; the birds have done with nesting and have therefore cut off from the rover the additional pleasure of looking for their eggs ; and later, also, the heat begins. Now for the desultory walker a blend of hot or cold, or rather, warmth and freshness, is important, and a showery day he will welcome. To be rained upon and sunned upon in one walk is to be in

The Walking Months

Nature's good books. She extends the privilege only rarely. That is why April or May is the ideal time.

The catalogue of necessities which I have just dogmatically given may be modified a little without serious injury to the ideal. Thus, thought for the morrow may be present now and then, but fugitively ; the knapsack may go altogether, its only value (and one that compensates the owner for the irksomeness of carrying it) being that it predicates a romantic uncertainty about where the night is going to be spent ; the heather is a mere matter of taste. But the footpath clause is unassailable ; I cannot let that go. It is because all my life I have been baulked of accepting the invitation of this footpath and that, that I included it in the scheme at all, and it must not be expunged.

To be able to follow whatever footpath one will is the very heart of the game. The other morning I walked into the town to meet a visitor. Having only just enough time, I stepped out briskly ; but the sense of duty in my punctual head never reached my feet at all. No sooner did a little footpath cross my track than I found them wavering that way : it was all I could do to make them reasonable ; rebellion inhabited every nail, rank anarchy was enthroned

The Bewitched Shoes

upon both uppers. I got them to the town at last, but I was exhausted. The worst of it is that my sympathies were with them all the while, and nothing but necessity saved me from giving way. My head was adamant, but, as the saying is, my heart was in my boots. Is it not in Hans Christian Andersen that a bewitched pair of shoes carry their wearer into peril? The idea is one for a writer like Mr. Anstey. I can see the synopsis as I write:—A diabolical cobbler settles in the village, and soles-and-heels the villagers with magic leather; everything goes askew; the Vicar is irresistibly borne into the public-house and held fast against the bar; the publican is propelled to the most conspicuous pew; the profoundest of the old maids is found steering a bee-line course of terrible velocity for the front door of the most inveterate of the bachelors, and nothing can stop her; while a poor country recluse, who ought to be doing his daily work, is brought to penury and unfruitfulness by an inability to resist the seductive call of footpaths. That's me, as grammarians try not to say. I really must speak to our cobbler.

But how seductive this call of the footpath is! However delightful the path you are at the moment treading may be, the next one always seems to

Footpath and Road

promise a shade more of beauty or mystery. You see it fading away over the ridge, and the temptation to learn what happens after is intense. The fact that a footpath always goes somewhere is one of its charms, and to conjecture where a footpath goes is not the least pleasure of a country walk. "I expect it leads to that farm," says one. "No, I think it hits the road over there, and just cuts off this corner," says another. "Why shouldn't it be the path to —?" asks the third; and in the end there is nothing to do but try it. So are good rambles compassed.

Not that the open road is to be slighted. There it is, broad and white and hard; but the open road has no subtleties. Now a footpath is of a shy, retiring character, with unexpected turns and twists, dips and elevations, with unlooked-for shade and sun. Its voice is low beside the clarion call of the open road; but it is very sweet. The footpath is, in a way, more human than the road. To a certain extent a footpath is also a protest against the road. Being wayward itself, vagrom, capricious, its appeal is to the traveller whose sympathies are with those characteristics. The open road cries to a blunter, a more direct mind.

Gates and Views

It is a fine thing to begin a footpath. Anyone may have this honour by accident; but few of us can knowingly lay claim to it. I have assisted, however, to maintain a right-of-way by stamping up and down it to emphasise the apparent importance of the track; and my old Sussex friend with the good taste in walking-sticks once spent a whole night in the same noble occupation. That is true zeal.

In a hilly country the most satisfying rests that come are those taken leaning on a gate. To see a view properly one must be still, and one can be very still leaning on a gate. The body reposes while the eyes work. Last summer I walked along a hill in Kent, over a common. This common was on the top of the hill, and the roadway ran over the turf parallel with the line of the range and about a hundred yards from the summit, all along—say for half a mile. On the lower side of this roadway—a footpath enclosed by old ruts would be the more exact description—was a hedge, also running all the way along; and this hedge served as so complete a barrier to the view, that a wayfarer plumped suddenly down on this path could be quite unaware that he was five hundred feet above the sea level. On the one hand, he would see the common, just then a blaze of gold gorse bushes

A Kentish Gate

backed by sombre heather, with a plover wheeling and tumbling in the sky above it; and, on the other, nothing but the tender green of the beech trees, which, twisted and gnarled under the restraining influence of the hand-bill, made as impenetrable a screen as the most sensitive recluse or misanthrope could need. As I have said, the wayfarer would have been quite unaware that he was five hundred feet above the sea level.

Except at the gates! For in this hedge were three gates, and those gates opened on to three counties—Kent and Surrey and Sussex. To come unexpectedly on one of them was the suddenest thing! One stood still and the world was merely sky and hedge and a strip of common; a single step and two hundred square miles lay beneath you. And such square miles!—soft and peaceful, made domestic and kindly by comfortably-rounded oaks and red roofs and the gentle whiteness of oast vanes. That for the foreground; farther were the hills, a faint misty purple. And all this spread out for the quiet eye by a five-barred gate!

I remember meeting with the same effect—the same unlocking of a view by a gate—on a piece of the Pilgrim's Way, just out of Guildford, before

ABOVE RUTA

Newland's Corner is reached. The view there is not so ample: Martha's Chapel takes up so much of it; but the suddenness is the same, and a gate plays the same part. But the suddenest view that was ever mine I came upon in Italy. Some fifteen miles south of Genoa, on the Ligurian coast, is a little seaport named Santa Margherita. High on a ridge of the Apennines, above Santa Margherita, is the village of Ruta. The road from Santa Margherita to Ruta climbs the hills inland: there is nothing to see in the distance but peak on peak, valley after valley, and, near at hand, villas, vineyards, white bell-towers, olive groves. And then, at Ruta, the road runs through a tunnel cut through the rock, and you pass from this grey-green world through a momentary blackness into full view of the blue gulf of Genoa, the distant Alpes Maritimes, snow-clad and dazzling, the seething city of Genoa, and, nearer to your feet, Camogli and Nervi. It is so sudden as to make one wince, almost as though a white bird flew in one's face. But only for an instant. Thereafter are supreme content and rest—the satisfied sense that can come only when one reclines on a high hill, gazing at a murmuring plain.

Birds and their Enemies



FOR the past two weeks I have been watching two nests in the garden—a thrush's and a long-tailed tit's. The thrush built silently and unobserved in a box tree, the first news we had of the nest being the noisy departure of the old bird as someone moved too near. Providence surely (one cannot help thinking) having done so much for birds, might have gone a step further and gifted them with the knowledge that when in danger it is better to lie low than to bustle away. However, off the thrush flew, and revealed five eggs. A day or so later the young birds hatched out.

The long-tailed tits worked entirely without secrecy. They sought their building site almost ostentatiously, and, having settled upon it, conveyed their materials thither under our very eyes. Lichen from the apple trees formed the outer wall, and the lining was chiefly

Sunday Afternoon

feathers from other birds, but whether picked up casually or fought for I know not. The building operations lasted about ten days; and then came the eggs; and then, as I had foreseen from the beginning, the tragedy. For these foolish birds had set up their home in the hedge that runs by the footpath, in itself a ridiculous enough thing, and then, nominally for protective purposes, I suppose, had used a lichen that did not in the least correspond with the surrounding colour. All this I could have told them, but man is never so helpless as in his relations with birds. Perhaps it would have been kinder to destroy the nest's foundations at once; but only very strong people can be kind like that. All that was done was to call a committee to inquire into a means of hiding in some way the positively clamorous visibility of the nest. We walked up and down the path re-arranging the branches. Finally we decided that such matters are best left to Fate.

Fate, however, does not seem to think much of birds, for when, after an absence of two or three days, I went to see the nest again, every trace of it had vanished. Some village boys on a Sunday afternoon foray (Sunday afternoon being the deadliest time for all accessible creatures in these parts) had

Life's Ironies

torn the nest bodily from the hedge, and it is probably now on a neighbour's mantelpiece. So much for the toil of two weeks and the maternal solicitude of a week longer, and so much for my reputation as a gentleman among long-tailed tits.

I then went on to the thrush's nest, and behold ! it lay on the ground, under the box tree, with one young bird dead beside it. Later, John, the odd man, told the story : he had heard that morning an unusual noise in the direction of the nest, and had even stopped work (that extreme measure !) to see what it was ; he found nothing, but could now tell that a cat must have attacked the birds, and the old one have done her best to repulse it, but without success.

Two tragedies in as many days, two families destroyed, two beautiful natural processes brought to nothing !

Of the two depredators the cat is the more monstrous, because whereas a boy unthinkingly, by a kind of sense of duty as a boy, takes a nest whenever he finds it, a cat mercilessly and deliberately marks a nest down, watches the growth of the young birds, and strikes at the precise moment when they are as big as they can be before flying. I am not

A Perplexed Adult

blaming the cat—that would be absurd ; but I am vexed with her for making my position as an oracle (to the young) so difficult this morning. For the story is not yet all told. I have to add that when the young thrushes were still babies, and before the long-tailed tit had laid at all, a little girl was brought here, and I was glad to be able to show her the nests and say something about the beautiful ways of Nature. That was all right ; but this morning she came in again and was for seeing how both broods had progressed, and I had, of course, to tell her of our losses. So far as the tits were concerned the case presented little difficulty, for it comes naturally to even a little girl to think but lightly of the enormities of "horrid boys" (as we called them). But the cat? We have the misfortune to keep a cat here, and to be very fond of it, and the odds are quite heavy that it was this identical cat that consumed the thrushes and destroyed the nest. Under that impression the little girl refused to take any notice of the cat, nor could she understand how we can possibly continue to give such a creature love and shelter. She asked me the most direct questions on the matter, and I had no answers, and now I am a dishonoured thing.

And truly the whole thing is rather a puzzle. Why

The Blood Tax

should a cat that is properly fed, and has its will of the mice, eat the birds of the air? Why should boys be unable to permit a bird to hatch out its eggs in peace? The law of the survival of the fittest hardly applies, for surely a thrush is as fit as a cat, and a long-tailed tit as fit as a boy. I know a dozen boys at least whom I would willingly exchange for the intimacy of a pair of these birds. Of course, it is all right, really. We all prey on one another, and all in turn are preyed upon. Probably those young thrushes had each eaten some scores of very estimable and life-loving worms; probably the tits had slain insects by the thousand, and equally probably our cat will one night be caught in a trap, and that village boy will enlist and some day fall on a battlefield with a Mauser bullet through his heart. A life for a life, says Nature. And yet one is puzzled still. When man opened the door to let humanity in, he let in a host of doubts and misgivings at the same time.

This is not our only tragedy. There is just now at the farm a little brood of ducklings, who move about ever in a solid phalanx—a little yellow cloud which, though seven ducks compose it, you could at any time cover with a dinner napkin. I never saw such mobilisation. If unity were really strength, this

The Terrible Rat

company should be capable of anything. So one might think ; and yet the contrary is the fact, for the motive which leads to this excessive gregariousness is not aggression but fear. Collectively, seven yellow ducklings, with weakly, twittering beaks and foolishly limp necks, are no stronger than one ; but collectively their courage is greater ; and just now they need courage or stimulation very badly. Because of the rats. A day or so ago the little band numbered nine, then it numbered eight, now seven, and to-morrow there may be only six. Hence there is something very pathetic in the sight of these fearful little brothers and sisters crowding against each other in their broad-day passage from one side of the yard to the other. If they feel thus when the sun shines, how must their little hearts beat at night !

Their fear of rats cannot, I think, be more intense than mine. Rats are to me what snakes are to timid people in a snake country, or tarantulas in a tarantula country. The rat idea has a kindred hold on me, and has had ever since at school I first heard Southey's ballad of Bishop Hatto. The irresistibility of that army of rats swimming nearer and nearer to the castle in the river, and then up and up the stairs. . . . The rat is so terrible and so unclean.

The Cruel Cat

There is the story of the cornered rat that leaps for your throat. . . .

I met a rat a short time ago. I was descending a little hill, and he was climbing it, both of us in the middle of the road. I stood still and permitted him to pass—a great, surly, wicked, intent grandfather. A personified sin might easily have been figured thus. And yet a rat's private life, a rat's thoughts and conversation, may be far more wholesome than a rabbit's. (We don't really know anything.) Yet a thousand rabbits might play on the floor of my bedroom all night, and be hanged to them, while if a single rat so much as scratched beneath the flooring, I would lose all sleep and all peace of mind. Such is association. Such is the rat idea. And such is the basis of my grief for those luckless ducklings.

The ducklings, thrushes, and tits are not the only miniature things that are finding life too hard a nut. Old John, on his way back from dinner the other day, found a cat in the midst of that ghastly game which cats play with their victims. The victim in this case was a baby rabbit. By a sudden movement John rescued the little creature and brought it to us. To transpose a box into a hutch was, as the novelists say, the work of an afternoon, and the rabbit was

Farewell to Cats

placed within it, together with some grass and some milk. But either the nervous shock, or the frequency with which callers came to the hutch to make inquiries, was too much for it, and the next morning its poor little body was cold. A rabbit that could recover from a cat's persecution would, indeed, have an organisation of iron.

The memory of the bright light of fear that inhabited that little rabbit's eyes has for the time being removed all my good feeling for cats. Our kitten may frolic and curvet as she will, and twist her tiny body into a thousand attitudes of freakish and fascinating grace, but she leaves me without enthusiasm. I am tired of cats. Their rapacity is too continual, their cruelty too hideous, their beauty too superficial. Give me a plain, blundering, faithful-hearted, and true-eyed dog—a mongrel, even, if you will—before all the Persians of the Orient, or so I say to-day.

Not that one is profoundly in love with rabbits. Indeed, I cannot rise properly to the rabbit at all; I can only feel sorry for him. To respect him is impossible: his timidity goes beyond all bounds. Man may well be gratified to cause a stampede now and again among the smaller wild animals of his neighbourhood.

The Foolish Rabbit

but when the same stampede occurs every day among the same family, he deems it too much homage. Rooks can at enormous range distinguish between a walking-stick and a gun, between friend and foe, between Saturday and Sunday. Even sparrows discriminate. But rabbits are just fools. A footstep on the ground three hundred yards away starts them for home, no matter how succulent the greenery or how distant the burrow. One almost blushes to think what incredible distances one's punctual and harmless outgoing footfalls cause rabbits to run every morning, and one's returning steps every evening. In our case the warren is hard by the path, and the alarmed rabbit has therefore, in gaining safety, to approach the enemy. "Go back, go back, you little duffers! Finish your feeding and compose yourselves!" one mentally exclaims. But it is to no purpose—here they all come, hundreds of them, in an agony of fear.

A few rabbits attempt courage, but never a one achieves it. They sit up with alert ears and gather together pluck to brave it out; but by the time you are within fifty yards their hearts fail them, and they break for home. A frightened rabbit never runs straight: he swerves and swerves. This probably he has learned from experience or tradition, for it baulks

“Twinkletails”

the sportsman's aim. Nature never did a crueller thing than when she gave rabbits white tails : it makes it possible to shoot them long after it is too dark to see any other quarry. “Twinkletails” would be a pretty name for them. One often sees nothing of a rabbit but its flashing scut. Naturalists, I believe, are puzzled to account for it, except as an advantage to aiming man.

Young rabbits have far more enterprise than old. Indeed, rabbits go off sadly, almost as sadly as lambs, which take on stupidity steadily with years. A peculiarity of the young rabbit that is approached from a distance from its abode is to lie still in the fern or grass and sham death or coma. An old rabbit has not wit enough to do even that. One imagines the old rabbit a very treasure-house of counsel and warnings. Man must get a desperately bad character in the warrens.

Our squirrels are less shy than the rabbits. They have more audacity, more grit, more dare-devil. They let us approach within a few feet before moving, and then, quick as birds, with tail outspread, they dart to a tree. More often than not it is not the nearest tree : they keep enough composure to select. A squirrel seems never to lose his head ; a rabbit almost always

Squirrels

does. When a squirrel runs he loops over the ground in the way the sea-serpent travels in pictures. Once the tree is gained, he scampers up a yard or two, on the side farthest from the enemy, and then pauses as suddenly as if an enchanter had bidden him turn to stone. Nothing in nature is more motionless than a wary, watchful squirrel. He clings to the bark, with cocked head and fearful eyes, a matter of half a minute before climbing to the first fork of the boughs. But to say climbing is a mistake; it is not climbing: it is just running, or, better still, going. A squirrel goes up a tree.

The squirrel of the artist sits on its hindquarters, under the shelter of its tail, and nibbles at the nut which its forepaws hold. The position is, indeed, only one remove from saying grace, and reminds one of the child in Stevenson's verse who behaves "mannerly at table." But one does not often catch them in this attitude in the woods. There the squirrel is usually seen making little furtive dashes among the dead leaves on the ground: a tiny red animal, which, were it not for its tail-plume, might be taken at a distance for a rat. Now and then the nursery illustration is realised, but only seldom. Squirrels are very ready to be angry, and they are incapable of dis-

The Ageless Squirrel

guising their feelings. They are voluble as fishwives. If you would test the squirrel's powers of repartee, you must drive one to the branches of an isolated tree and then rap the trunk with a stick. He will "answer back" as long as you stay there.

One pretty peculiarity touching the squirrel is that we do not associate it with age. We speak of a young rabbit or an old rabbit, a young horse, an old cow, a kitten or a cat, a puppy or a dog; but a squirrel, no matter what its development, is just a squirrel: that is to say, an indescribably wonderful woodland creature, as far removed from our own life and ken as any English animal. The lyrical swiftness of the squirrel partakes of the miraculous; and this, combined with his elusiveness,—though he is a thousand strong in the neighbouring wood,—makes him a creature apart. Thousands of persons in this country have never seen a squirrel.

The squirrel is in the main invincibly and joyously untameable, although many a man has kept one as a pet. Compared with a squirrel of the beech grove, the wildest rabbit is domesticated. But, indeed, beside the squirrel all the four-footed creatures of the field are pedestrian, commonplace. Even the hare, with its incredible celerities, is dull compared with this

Bobine Pellicule

brilliant aeronaut. The squirrel must be emboughed if he is to show in brightest pin. On the ground he is swift and graceful, but his tail impedes instead of assisting him ; in a tree, or in mid-air between two trees, he is a miracle of joyous pulsating life, a bird with an additional infusion of nervous fluid, a poem in red fur.

I must now return to the cat. Since where there is a cat there is death, and since you cannot have both birds and a cat, I said that the cat must go. (Her name, by the way, was Bobine Pellicule. We found it on a packet of photographic films, and deeming it too good to be lost, conferred it on her.) And I was the more certain she must go when that evening she caught a little bat and tortured it under a chair in the garden. It was rescued, and turned out to be of extraordinary friendliness, neither scratching nor biting, as tradition alleges of it, but drinking milk, and crawling over our hands and across the table in its velvet cloak like a burlesque Hamlet. But agreeable as was this rencontre with an animal difficult to get upon terms with, I said again that Bobine must go.

Having said it again, I forgot the matter, leaving the manner of its departure to Fate. Fate settled it with a promptness and thoroughness that took the

A Suicide

household by the throat ; for the very next morning she jumped down the well. It is a deep well, and we have no Johnny Stout within call, and death must have been rapid. Nothing but remorse could follow upon such a tragedy, our original idea of getting rid of the cat being by gift. However, it was useless to mourn over so complete a disaster, and we reconciled ourselves to the inevitable, sorry but relieved. And then gradually we began to realise (as the grappling hooks failed to bring the suicide to the surface) that if a cat were to lay itself out to die with as much inconvenience to its unsympathetic owners as could possibly be arranged, it could not do anything better than just to drown itself in their well. The chain and winch were too light for it to be safe to descend by them ; the depth was too great for a ladder to be of any use ; Bobine was too slippery for the hooks to catch on. In death this small creature punished my hostility, and punished it increasingly every minute.

To return for a moment to the bats. Chancing to be dining one evening out of doors, I noticed that every now and then, as it grew more dusk, bats were materialised in the most extraordinary sudden way from a corner of the roof. Fetching the glasses, I discovered that our roof at that part was full of them, and

Young Night Thoughts

they passed in and out under a raised tile. There is nothing swifter or quieter than the way in which bats leave a hole and are instantly on the wing—like young night thoughts. I say quieter, but as a matter of fact the attentive ear can hear a little squeaky argument before the flight, as though there was a question of precedence to settle. The bat which the cat played with must have rolled off the roof, having left the home too early.

Birds, of course, are not unmixed blessings. They certainly wake one very early ; they pull thatch all to pieces ; they eat the buds and they eat the fruit. A pair of dandy bullfinches with an irreproachable tailor and perfect manners completely stripped our damson tree of buds two springs ago. The cuckoo, too, is no credit to his race : his arrogance and want of a responsible sense are deplorable, and he sings the same song so many times over that one is ashamed of him. But worse than all are the birds that ruin flowers out of sheer wantonness—a wantonness equal to that of the boys who rob or destroy nests.

I was in the country on the first day of spring this year, and I went at once to a place in the orchard where there are five or six large primrose roots. The flowers were all out, as many as twenty to thirty on

“Kill Hym”

each root ; but when I knelt down to see them I found that almost every head had been snipped off. This is a bird's doing, and I have never learned the purpose of the deed. Can there be some delicate flavour in the neck of the primrose, or is it wanton destructiveness? I believe the scoundrel is a blackbird.

I remember a letter to the *Spectator* some years ago, in which a correspondent quoted from the margin to a woodcut of a bullfinch in an old black-letter Natural History in the library at Hertford College, Oxford, this implacable note in seventeenth-century handwriting: “A smal fowle. He eateth my apple buds in Spring. Kill hym.”

Similarly I would indict the blackbird for thus ruining the most beautiful of flowers with his gold dagger of a bill: “A bold black ravener. He decapitateth my primroses. Behead him.” And yet would I? Probably not. More likely would I try to emulate my friend Brother Benignus.

Benignus and the Flor Finas o o

IN one of the prettiest of Katharine Tynan's poems, all of which have some of the freshness of an April morning, there is told the story of Brother Benignus and his bargain with the blackbirds. It was arranged that if the blackbirds abstained from eating the Abbot's cherries and youngling peas a steady supply of corn and manchet ends and marrowy bones should be supplied to them all the year round ; and the compact was kept honourably on both sides.

I thought of this poem (which was amongst those which one used to cut out of the *Pall Mall Gazette* once or twice a week in the old days, and wonder who wrote them, and put aside)—I thought of this poem on Monday last, when, in one of the many intervals of rain in a village cricket-match, I was led away by a neighbour to look at his garden. It was

A Friend of Birds

one of the dark gardens, which have a charm of their own at least equal in certain moods to that of the riotous herbaceous variety : a garden of soft turf and shrubberies.

As we walked in the rain between box and yew hedges, my friend stopped every now and then to show me a nest—a wagtail's here, a chaffinch's there, a bullfinch's, two flycatchers', a Jenny Wren's, and so forth—all of which were occupied by young birds, or had been until a day or so ago, and all of which he had been in the habit of visiting regularly ever since the building site had first been decided upon. One of the flycatchers was in a nest that she had erected the previous year, and had now returned to and repaired for her new family. So well did she know her landlord that she did not trouble to leave her eggs, but allowed his hand to take her off and replace her—an act which set me wondering if, with the best feelings in the world towards her and her kind, I should ever be trusted in the same way. The gulf between a man and a little garden bird is extraordinarily difficult to bridge, but here was one who had bridged it. To possess a gentle friendliness for birds is not, I take it, enough ; one must have something more than that : just that added something

A United Family

which the birds by a subtle sympathy instantly recognise.

Passing on to the drive, we stopped before one of those fantastic and too-symmetrical trees which simple folk call "Monkey Puzzlers" but the learned *Araucarias*, and I was here shown an object on the trunk, about six feet from the ground, and asked what I thought it was. The answer was obvious enough: it was a cigar-box with a hole in it about the size of half a crown; I could read *Flor Fina* on it in the familiar stencilling of Cuba. "And supposing," Benignus continued, "I said that there were thirteen young birds in it, what would you say?" This being the kind of question which requires no answer but patience, I said nothing, while he unhooked the box and brought it out to me in the drive. His words were true enough: there at the bottom was a mass of quivering green and blue life amid moss and wool, representing, as he assured me, thirteen titmice; but why one should say thirteen any more than thirty I could not see, so inextricably corporate was this palpitating community, surely the most united and most uncountable family in the world. How the operations of individual feeding and care can go on in the recesses of that dark and circumscribed cavity

From Cuba to Kent

is one of the miracles ; but they do. Each child had received proper attention, and in a day or so all will be free, emerging through the hole no bigger than half-a-crown into this perilous world of cats and hawks, catapults and guns. Long may they survive !

But what an odd destiny for the cigar-boxes of Havana ! I hope that some author of the children's books or school readers that are used in Cuba has heard of this pretty English habit, for it is a habit (and Dutch too : I saw several cigar-box nests on fir trees in the gardens near Haarlem last year), because it should add a good deal of interest to the monotony of the manufacture of those articles when the young Cubans become men and box-makers.

We examined another of the model dwellings, which had only three little birds in it, and another in which the eggs were still to hatch, the mother so valuing her time upon them as to refuse to leave, although the box was unhooked, carried some feet, and opened in the broad light. There she sat quite unconcerned, knowing in her brave but infinitesimal heart that a gentleman who gives birds free lodgings can have no sinister intent. I asked Benignus if he thought that he suffered at all in his kitchen garden and orchard from this tolerance of what all the ordinary

The Witness-Bearers

country-people that I know consider a nuisance of some magnitude—even to offering a penny a nest to the children as an inducement to get them taken. He said he did not think he could complain; and, at any rate, a song was worth paying for. He said also that he thought that birds, like tramps, have signs by which they indicate to other birds that a garden is a sanctuary. It is a pretty thought, and some day in the early spring next year, I hope as I pass his little estate to have the luck to observe a tit laboriously and mysteriously tracing with her beak, on one of those smooth red surfaces on the trunk of a Scotch fir, the cabalistic signs which shall convey to other and strange tits the welcome tidings that this is the kind of man who knows what to do with the box when he has smoked the last of his Flor Finas.

The Divine Leaf



THE origin of tea, according to tradition, is as simple as it is credible. Prince Darma, in the remote ages, was a holy Asiatic who spent day and night in meditations upon the Infinite. One night his ecstasy was interrupted by sleep. On awaking he was so dismayed at his infirmity that he tore off his eyelids and flung them on the ground. The spectacle of a holy Asiatic flinging his eyelids on the ground deserves the notice of an historical painter. On visiting the spot later, Prince Darma found that his eyelids had grown into a shrub. He had the wit to take some of the leaves and pour boiling water upon them. Ever after, by simply drinking a little of the precious liquor, he was able to keep sleep at bay and pursue his thoughts with added zest and profit.

Stuart Tea

The English history of the plant is comparatively brief. According to the popular statement, tea was introduced into this country from Holland in 1666. D'Israeli, however, thinks the date earlier, because he once heard of a collector whose treasures included Oliver Cromwell's teapot. This, perhaps, would be better evidence had we not all heard of the museum which possessed a small skull certified to be the head of Oliver Cromwell when a boy. None the less, one Thomas Garway, a tobacconist and coffee-dealer in Exchange Alley, is known to have sold tea at the rate of three pounds sterling per pound weight about 1660. Not, however, for a score or more of years later was tea at all common, although Charles the Second's queen, Catherine, who had sipped it with gusto in Portugal, stamped the beverage with her approval in the Court. Mr. Waller wrote a poem on the new fashion, in which he praised together the "best of queens" and the "best of herbs." Mr. Waller, by the way, learned from a Jesuit who came from China in 1664, that tea and beaten-up eggs made a worthy substitute for a "competent meal." Concerning the popularisation of tea in this country, there is a story told by Southey of the great-grandmother of a friend of his, who made one of the party that

Elementary Counsels

sat down to the first pound of tea that ever came to Penrith. They boiled it in a kettle, and ate the leaves with butter and salt, wondering wherein the attraction lay.

The wise tea-maker is suspicious of elaborate paraphernalia. The best tea is made with a black kettle on the fire, and an earthenware or china teapot. Copper kettles on tripods (heated by tiny spirit stoves that hold too little spirit), silver teapots, and kindred refinements, do not help the leaf. Nor should strainers be desired. Tea requires no "patents," least of all a spoon resembling a perforated walnut, alleged to be unrivalled for the preparation of a single cup. A single cup! Who, if the tea were worth drinking, ever wanted but a single cup?

Tea should be brewed of the right strength at the beginning, and poured out at once into cups and reserved cups (or decanted into another teapot). To burden the water with more leaves than it can attend to is thoughtless, and every drop that is afterwards added impairs the flavour of the liquor; notwithstanding the old Scotch lady who recommended a certain brand of leaf because it had "such a grip of the thir-r-d water." Using too little tea is a fault never committed by the unwise and imprudent. The

Kien Long's Counsel

ordinary rule is one spoonful for each guest and one for the pot, but some brands go farther than others. A large pot is imperative. Few things in life are more saddening than the smallness of some people's teapots. The teapot should be warmed for the reception of the leaves. Wetting the tea, as it is called, is a horrid habit. All the water that is required for each brew should be poured in at once on the instant that it boils. Water that has long been boiling is unprofitable and stale and incapable of extracting from the opening leaf its richest essences. When there has been delay, and it is impracticable to boil a full kettle again, it is well to pour into it from a high altitude a little fresh cold water. The more forcible the impact of this new water, the more is the old supply invigorated and fitted to cope worthily with the leaf. "At your ease," sang the Emperor Kien Long in the poem that is painted on every teapot in China—"at your ease drink this precious liquor, which chases away the five causes of trouble."

Men's tea, I think, excels women's. Taking them as a whole, one may say that no class of men make such good tea as undergraduates. Time is theirs; conveniences are to hand; and though they are young and ardent, haste and enthusiasm are bad

Men and Women

form. Hence the brew has a dignity, a gravity, a composure worthy of it. There is something Asiatic about the reserved undergraduate—and to-day the conscious ones are all reserved—that stimulates tea to do its best for him. Later in life, when he has left the university and met a woman, the undergraduate becomes again an Occidental. These undergraduate tea connoisseurs are a development of the last few years: the invitation, "Look in this afternoon and try my new Overland China," to which grey walls, stained by the stress of centuries, now re-echo, would strike dismay to the heart of Cuthbert Bede. The thoughtful undergraduate as soon misses his tobacco as his tea. I have seen him presiding over the teapot with the air of Roger Bacon in his laboratory. Men always bring to a culinary feat this interested manner, a little touched by mystery. To the woman cooking is natural; to the man it is ex-orbitant, and, partially, a lark.

Just as men are more intimately interested than women in the making of tea, so are they often more subtly conscious of its merits. Women do not discriminate so calmly. Tea to them is tea; tea to a man is China, or India, or Ceylon, "golden-tipped," "overland borne," and the like. It is not for men

Mrs. Edward FitzGerald

but for families that polysyllabic brands are put upon the market. For families, for families, did Arabi Pasha beguile the tedium of exile by overlooking plantations in Ceylon; for families, were artists employed to delineate aged grandmothers in the act of being reminded of the delicious teas of thirty years ago. That is why men who understand offer you better tea than women.

But it must not be supposed that the art of appreciating tea is unknown to women. Nothing could be farther from the truth. I knew a venerable lady with whom tea-making was almost a religious rite. To her high-backed chair was first brought the caddy—an inlaid casket—which was deposited on a table beside her. Then from the depths of a china vase the key was extracted. My hostess assumed her spectacles, and, taking the key, turned it gravely, scooped out spoonfuls heaped high of the fragrant leaves—and they were very fragrant—and tipped them into the silver teapot proffered to her as by a royal cupbearer. Then she closed the lid, locked it, and handed the key to the attendant maid, who first bore it to its abode, and then, returning, carried the caddy reverently before her to its accustomed niche; while her mistress removed her spectacles and relaxed

Two Coleridges

her features until they once more shone with their natural benignancy.

The happiest tea-drinkers are those who have generous friends in China. No tea is like theirs. That inscrutable humorist, Li Hung Chang, left presents of priceless tea in his wake as he passed smiling through the West—tea with a distinction until then unsuspected by the few persons whose glory it was to taste it. Among these was Mr. Gladstone, great among tea-drinkers, whose pleasant humour it was to speak of a cup as a dish. Dean Stanley was among the tea-giants, and Dr. Johnson's prowess is a by-word. Hartley Coleridge was another colossus of the caddy. One who knew him tells that once on being asked how many cups he was in the habit of drinking, the poet replied with scorn, "Cups! I don't count by cups. I count by pots."¹

The commonest tea is black, and it is almost always a blend, even when the terms Congou and

¹ Hartley's father, in answer to a tea-question, made a reply touched by no such arrogance. Carlyle tells, in the *Life of John Sterling*, how one afternoon at Highgate, Mrs. Gillman handed Coleridge a belated cup of tea with the remark that she hoped it was all right. "Better than I deserve, madam, better than I deserve," was the reply.

Cannibal Tea

Souchong are employed. China, India, and Ceylon—all three—are levied upon for these mixtures. Their description in the catalogues is worth study; indeed, all merchants' adjectives are worth study. A table of ten graduated qualities of black teas lies before me. The lowest-priced variety is "pure and useful"; then "strong and liquoring"; then "strong and rich flavoured." While the same kind, but twopence dearer, is "finer grade and very economical"; then "splendid liquor"; then "extra choice and strongly recommended"; then "beautiful quality"; then "soft and rich"; then "small young leaf, magnificent liquor"; and, finally, at three shillings and fourpence, "very choice, small leaf, a connoisseur's tea." But this is not a list for the true connoisseur: to him three-and-fourpenny tea would mean little. In another list I find the description "very pungent and flavoury." "Syrupy" is also a hard-worked epithet. It would puzzle a conscientious merchant to fit any of these terms, even the humblest, to some of the tea that one now and then is forced to drink. But the British tourist is attracted not by tea as tea, but by tea with accessories. The late Arthur Cecil, the comedian, used to tell with great glee of the cannibal tea at Kew: thus—"Tea,

Ship's Tea

plain, 6d.;" "Tea, with shrimps, 9d.;" "Tea, with children, 1s." Of all the public varieties the tea obtained at a railway station is perhaps the worst. The liquor served at those carnivals which are known to schoolboys as tea-fights (or bun-struggles) is a close competitor, but being free, or inexpensive, it has an advantage over the station tea, which is costly. A question in an examination paper circulated among the students at a London hospital asked the reader to "give some idea of the grief felt by the refreshment-room tea at never having seen Asia." This sorrow might be shared by the station blend. Ship's tea—that is to say, tea in the cabin of the ocean tramp—would be worse, only that at sea one is too hungry to care for refinements of flavour. The officers of a vessel on which I once was purser discriminated between tea and coffee by taking the temperature of the milk jug. If hot, the beverage was coffee; if cold, tea.

School-Hampers and Fireworks ♪ ♪

THE other day, while aimlessly turning over the pages of a list of one of the great London Stores, I came upon a description of the school-hampers and Christmas-hampers which the firm is prepared to despatch—more than prepared, one supposes, even pleased: for if there is one employment above another that should carry good-humour with it, it is the preparation and despatch of a hamper. As I had always conceived hampers to be a home-designed product of the kitchen and store-room, their supply was an additional proof of the thoroughness of the Stores system. I knew that conjurors were to be obtained there, and Ethiopian minstrels, and the cinematoscope, and paper plates for picnics, and I knew also that the transfer of a non-transferable Stores ticket is one of the sins which the Recording Angel blots; but the hamper-page was a true surprise. Forthwith, I determined, if ever a change of employ-

For the Crown

ment is necessary, to apply to Messrs. Blank & Co. for engagement as their hamper editor, or even to establish a hamper bureau of my own. In a world which is mostly disappointment and frustration, the life of a hamper editor must be radiant.

Half the hamper-page was devoted to school-hampers and half to Christmas-hampers, and really it was very good reading. Few novelists write so much to the point. Here is the first entry:—

SCHOOL-HAMPERS AT 5S. CONTAIN—

2 lbs. currant cake.	1 Jar marmalade.
1 Ham and chicken sausage.	1 Bottle sweets.
1 Jar potted meat.	12 Oranges.
1 „ jam.	2 lbs. mixed nuts.

What expression of satisfaction is now most in favour at school I cannot say—"ripping," perhaps, or perhaps "jolly decent": I heard both terms lately, although they may have been survivals—but even a five-shilling hamper should elicit it. The "1 Bottle sweets" is, perhaps, a questionable inclusion. Butter-scotch, toffee, and chocolate (the cream dug out and eaten first) are sound boyish tastes; but "1 Bottle sweets" has a feminine ring. The purist also would object to the phrases "1 Jar jam" and "1 Jar marmalade"—pot is the word. And the oranges would, one

For the Sovereign

hopes, at another season be replaced by apples. Yet, carp as we may, the five-shilling hamper is desirable.

Now see what another crown will bring—enough for any one boy :—

SCHOOL-HAMPERS AT 10S. CONTAIN—

- | | |
|----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 4 lbs. currant cake. | 1 Bottle sweets. |
| 1 Ham and chicken sausage. | 2 lbs. mixed confectionery. |
| 2 Jars potted meat. | 6 Mince pies. |
| 1 Jar marmalade. | 24 Oranges. |
| 1 „ jam. | 2 lbs. mixed nuts. |

The “1 Bottle sweets” still persists, but “2 lbs. mixed confectionery” come in to rectify it. Come in also “6 Mince pies”—the list clearly belongs to the winter—and there is a lavish duplication of other matters. One of the “2 Jars potted meat” might well be anchovy or bloater paste—anchovy for choice, because it lasts longer ; and I do not greatly esteem the “Ham and chicken sausage.” Boys infinitely prefer sardines ; indeed, the omission of sardines from all these hampers is a serious fault.

Add ten shillings :—

SCHOOL-HAMPERS AT 20S. CONTAIN—

- | | |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 4 lbs. currant cake. | 6 Mince pies. |
| 2 Ham and chicken sausages. | 2 lb. box mixed crystallised fruit. |
| 1 German sausage. | 4 Jars assorted potted meats. |
| 1 Box braised beef, 2 lbs. | 24 Oranges. |
| 2 Jars jam. | 3 lbs. mixed nuts. |
| 2 „ marmalade | 2 Bottles sweets. |

The Useful Nut

With a shining pound it is manifest that one may make a young friend very ill. Probably this class of hamper is intended rather for brothers or for boys of conspicuous generosity. From one or two items, such as the "1 Box braised beef, 2 lbs.," it would seem that the gentleman who now acts as hamper editor has an eye to bedroom feasts, because the theory of the hamper is not to take the place of school meals, but to amend them, to add a silver lining to them; and braised beef is a viand in itself rather than a concomitant. Hence, possibly, the nuts, whose shells are notoriously good to place on the stairs, where they crack beneath the feet of the approaching master and so give warning of danger. In default of nuts a small boy must endure the draughty duties of sentinel. To return to our criticism, the "1 Bottle sweets" has now become two, and the "mixed confectionery" has given way to "mixed crystallised fruits." The principal lack in each variety of hamper is drink, unless the oranges are calculated to fill that office. Why not a dozen of stone ginger beer in the stead of sweets?

To learn the news that a hamper is awaiting one in the hall is a supreme school joy: for one moment it can render the heaviest imposition null and void. Of

Nursery Moralists

the behaviour of boys on receiving hampers much has been written. Ann and Jane Taylor's "Plum-cake" and "Another Plum-cake" are among favourite nursery apologues, and Mrs. Elizabeth Turner has worked the same theme with admirable thoroughness. In a moving trilogy she vividly presents the three methods in which a large plum-cake may be dealt with. First comes Harry. Harry was greedy and stingy.

"When it arrived, the little boy
Laugh'd, sung, and jumped about for joy;
But ah, how griev'd I am to say
He did not give a bit away!

He *ate*, and *ate*, and *ate* his fill;
No wonder that it made him ill.
Pain in his stomach and his head
Oblig'd him soon to go to bed."

Then comes Peter. Peter was stingy too, but stingy to himself as well as to others—in short, a miser.

"And sometimes silently he'd go,
When all he thought engag'd below,
To eat a *very little* piece,
For fear his treasure should decrease.

When next he went (it makes me laugh),
He found the mice had eaten half;
And what remain'd, though once a treat,
So mouldy 'twas not fit to eat."

William Wins

Lastly, William. William was free-handed, virtuous ;
William behaved nobly.

“ ‘Come round,’ he cried—‘each take a slice ;
Each have his proper share of ice !
We’ll eat it up among us here ;
My birthday comes but once a year.’ ”

At this point, lo ! a blind beggar, to whom William
incontinently yielded his own slice and a penny
besides. The poem ends—

“ I need not ask each youthful breast
Which of these boys you like the best ;
Let goodness, then, incitement prove,
And imitate the boy you love.”

How can the youthful breast demur ? William,
William it is who, of course, comes out at the head
of the poll.

Quite as interesting a study to the psychologist is
the conduct of the other boys when one of their
schoolfellows receives a hamper. But there are
pleasanter matters for inquiry. Poor human nature !

The hamper is not for food alone ; it is also the
travelling compartment of live stock. Dogs who
travel without a ticket usually do so in a hamper.
Cats are conveyed by that means from Blackburn to
Torquay, and the next day but one, dishevelled and

Loosing a Cockatoo

footsore, they creep into the Blackburn kitchen once again, and thus win attention from the *Spectator* and Mr. Tegetmeier of the *Field*, who occupies the same attitude to the homing instinct that Mrs. Prig did to Mrs. Harris. It is strange that no one ever meets a cat under the dominion of the homing instinct. It would be quite unmistakable, because of the bee-line which it takes and the rate it has to travel at. As Mark Twain wrote of the jackass rabbit, "Long after it is out of sight you can hear it whizz." I suppose a homing cat never stops for a mouse.

Carrier pigeons are conveyed in hampers to the place where their flight is to begin ; but not all birds are so lucky. I was never so surprised in my life as when the naturalist's man from whom I once bought a cockatoo thrust the screaming thing into a deal box hardly bigger than itself, and hammered nails two inches long through the lid. Then he sawed off a corner for ventilation, wrapped up the box in brown paper, fastened it noisily with string, and slammed it on the counter before me. Five hours later, after a weary and cold railway journey, a very angry and very dirty cockatoo was liberated by two frightened men in wicket-keeping gloves.

The Stores-supplied hamper is, I take it, designed

The Friendly Cook

to meet the requirements of the bachelor uncle who has no kitchen where he may prepare one. It therefore has notable uses. But the hamper, as most boys understand it, is a home-made blessing. More than one friendly intellect has contributed to its plenishing. The maternal mind is, of course, the fount and origin of good, but cook has had her say too. Cook knows Master Tom's tastes as well as anyone, perhaps better. Cook has memories . . . hence the cold plum-pudding. And at hamper-time a certain reason for the existence of sisters becomes evident : they can make toffee. The "1 Bottle sweets" is unknown to home-made hampers, but a bottle of raspberry vinegar has sometimes found its way therein. I have also a recollection of dough-nuts. Quince jam was of old a stimulating surprise. But the crowning triumph of any hamper is, of course, the cake. That is the nucleus ; all else is accessory.

Many fathers buy fireworks in boxes arranged by the dealer, but for the sheer joy of reading a firework catalogue it is better to arrange one's own display. Because a firework catalogue also is literature. It has not the quiet beauty, the tender poetry, of a rose-grower's list, but now and then it touches the heights. The rocket section is magnificent. Here is an item :

Brock's Paradoxes

"32 oz. rocket with seven asteroids changing colour, 17s. 6d." Two solid pounds of rocket! For seven guineas one can possess a flight of one hundred rockets, fifty bright and fifty coloured. In pyrotechnic circles the antithesis of "coloured" is not "plain," but "bright." What is a "Gerb"? Who knows? A Gerb is a Chinese Tree. A few shillings purchase a "Bouquet of Gerbs, or Chinese Trees." In another place, however, we find "Huge Gerb, or Fountain of Fire." A Gerb, therefore, is sometimes a Chinese Tree and sometimes a Fountain of Fire. Pyrotechnists are often loose, even paradoxical, in their terminology: thus elsewhere I note "Saxons, or Chinese Fliers," "Brilliant Suns, or Royal Stars," and, odder still, "Flying Pigeon, or Fiery Phoenix."

For a Niagara of Fire 34s. is asked; and for the device "Good Night" 50s. But "Good Night" is a sad spectacle—let us pass on. Plank down half a guinea (this counsel is only for the rich), and a "Mine of Jewel-headed Cobras" is yours. A "Tourbillon or Fiery Whirlwind" is cheaper, while for "Infernals" ("not to be held whilst lighting") you cannot pay more than sixpence. Hearing it explode, "Bang went saxpence," a Scotchman might say, indeed. The "Infernal" ("not to be held whilst lighting") is

Wayward Rockets

merely an emphasised Squib, and the embargo placed upon it has little weight with the ordinary boy. There are fathers, however, who obey it to the letter. For the cautious father, a taper attached to a walking-stick is a priceless boon, especially with rockets. The deliberateness of a rocket's start can be almost unbearable; and rockets have been known to swing round at the critical moment and enter upon a horizontal flight. But over the horizontal rocket let us draw a veil.

For those who do not esteem the joys of selecting their own fireworks for the back garden, or who have no knowledge of pyrotechny, there are the makers' boxes, varying in price from 5s. to pounds. It does not, however, seem to me that the imaginative sympathy at the back of these boxes is of the highest. Let us examine and explain. This, for example, is what the manufacturer offers for 5s., discount on fireworks being heavier than on books:—

12 Coloured Lights at 1d.
 12 Squibs at $\frac{1}{2}$ d.
 12 Crackers at $\frac{1}{2}$ d.
 6 Star Lights at $\frac{1}{2}$ d.
 6 Golden Rains at $\frac{1}{2}$ d.
 6 Snakes at $\frac{1}{2}$ d.
 1 Bright Roman Candle at 4d.
 2 Bright Roman Candles at 2d.

1 Coloured Candle at 6d.
 1 Flower Pot at 4d.
 1 " " 2d.
 1 Chinese Tree at 6d.
 1 Catherine Wheel at 4d.
 1 " " 2d.
 4 " " 1d.
 12 " " $\frac{1}{2}$ d.
 1 Jack-in-the-Box at 1s.
 1 Jewel Fountain at 6d.

Enter the Critic

Lavish, is it not? But the selection is open to objections. The Coloured Lights, Star Lights, and Golden Rains are feeble folk, and might all go in favour of Squibs and Crackers. The Star Lights merely drip blobs of fire ; the Golden Rains are ineffectual Squibs ; the Coloured Lights have too brief and tame a life. The four Catherine Wheels at a penny are enough of that variety of excitement. Catherine Wheels are ever kittle-cattle, and to spend fourpence on a single one is folly. The fourpenny one, the twopenny one, and the twelve halfpenny ones might therefore be removed, and with the money thus saved might be substituted either more Squibs and Crackers or a shilling Rocket, or two sixpenny Rockets, or one sixpenny Rocket and one Maroon. (A Maroon makes a magnificent detonation.) But except that—for the excitement of lighting it—every display should comprise one Rocket, my advice would be towards throwing the money into Squibs and Crackers. The strength of Squibs and Crackers is that they circulate and keep things merry. Their weakness is their want of decorativeness.

Here is the 7s. 6d. box :—

3 Coloured Lights at 6d.	6 Star Lights at $\frac{1}{2}$ d.
12 „ „ at 1d.	6 Rains at $\frac{1}{2}$ d.
12 Squibs at 1d.	6 Snakes at $\frac{1}{2}$ d.
6 Feathers at $\frac{1}{2}$ d.	1 Flower Pot at 4d.

For Ten Shillings

- 1 Flower Pot at 2d.
- 1 Catherine Wheel at 4d.
- 1 " at 2d.
- 3 " at 1d.
- 6 " at $\frac{1}{2}$ d.
- 1 Chinese Tree at 6d.
- 1 Mine of Serpents at 6d.

- 1 Jack-in-the-Box at 6d.
- 1 Bright Roman Candle at 4d.
- 1 " " at 2d.
- 2 Coloured " at 6d.
- 1 Jewel Fountain at 6d.
- 1 Chinese Flier at 6d.

The first item is good. Sixpenny Coloured Lights burn for some moments with very curious effects, and enable the faces at the window to recognise the figures in the garden. The last item is also commendable, for a Chinese Flier (when it flies) is an interesting article. The rest is subject to the same criticism as the five-shilling box. Certainly, in 7s. 6d. there should be a proportion set aside for Rockets: 16d., at least, for the purchase of two 1s. ones.

When it comes to ten shillings Rockets are easily possible. Yet the box at that price omits them. Thus:—

- 12 Coloured Lights at 1d.
- 1 Bengal Light at 6d.
- 1 Red Light at 6d.
- 1 Green Light at 6d.
- 24 Squibs at $\frac{1}{2}$ d.
- 12 Crackers at $\frac{1}{2}$ d.
- 3 " at 1d.
- 2 " at 2d.
- 6 Golden Rains at $\frac{1}{2}$ d.
- 6 Snakes at $\frac{1}{2}$ d.
- 6 Star Lights at $\frac{1}{2}$ d.

- 5 Blue Candles at $\frac{1}{2}$ d.
- 6 Feathers at $\frac{1}{2}$ d.
- 1 Catherine Wheel at 6d.
- 1 " " at 4d.
- 1 " " at 2d.
- 3 " " at 1d.
- 6 " " at $\frac{1}{2}$ d.
- 2 Bright Roman Candles at 6d.
- 2 Bright Roman Candles at 4d.

“ More Squibs ”

2 Coloured Roman Candles	1 Flower Pot at 6d.
at 6d.	1 „ „ at 4d.
1 Chinese Tree at 1s.	1 „ „ at 2d.
1 „ „ at 6d.	1 Jewel Fountain at 1s.
1 Jack-in-the-Box at 6d.	1 Coloured Roman Candle
1 Mine of Serpents at 6d.	at 1s.

Now here are serious flaws. First and foremost are the twopenny Crackers. Twopenny Cracker are too risky ; more often than not they cease to crack after the first few corners have been turned. And of what use are three penny crackers ? Either a dozen or none. Coloured Lights, Golden Rains, Star Lights, Blue Candles, Catherine Wheels (with the exception of four at a penny), the fourpenny and twopenny Flower Pots, the sixpenny Chinese Tree, the two fourpenny Roman Candles—all these might go. In their place I would have more Squibs and Crackers and some Rockets. The six Feathers could be retained for lighting purposes.

Neither catalogue nor boxes take any account of the most terrible firework that exists. This is the “ Lewes Rouser.” The Rouser is a form of Squib made expressly for use at Lewes, where the Fifth is observed sacredly, year after year. The carnival is threatened regularly on every Sixth, but, behold, the next November sees it as riotous as ever it was. It is

The Fifth at Lewes

a relic of Merrie England—a pandemonium of fire and excess. Lewes is given over to the fire-worshippers: huge blazes are kindled and fed in the midst of the streets; processions parade the town from dusk to midnight, fantastically garbed, discharging Rockets and Roman Candles as they move; effigies of the Pope, and other persons requiring, in the eyes of Lewes, execration, are at intervals consigned to the flames by the Bishops of the various bonfire societies involved; and the next morning the county paper contains full reports of their damnatory speeches. These bear ironically upon public events, after the manner of the Westminster Epilogue, but without its wit. So fierce a rain of fire plays upon the town that the householders board their windows and cover their gratings with wet straw.

Such is the scene of the Rouser; and the Rouser is worthy of it. This fearsome creature is half a Squib and half a Rocket; you light him and let him go; huge silver sparks (said to be the effect of steel filings) pour from him in such volume as to raise him from the ground and project him through the air with the speed of a rocket. After half a minute of this appalling exuberance, he bursts with the detonation of a Woolwich Infant. Imagine fifty of these bursting

The Rouser

at the same instant in every direction, accompanied by such lesser fry as the ordinary Squib and Cracker, and you realise why the Lewes amateur wears wire spectacles and his oldest clothes. Of all home-made fireworks the Rouser is best. But as a factor in back-garden displays? No.

The Poetry of Catalogues

AT a time when too much is done for the in-assiduous, roving reader; when the tendency is entirely towards frangible, even friable, reading-matter; one hesitates to commend to those that love literature the merits of catalogues. And yet a catalogue—a thing that costs nothing, a thing rescued possibly from the waste-paper basket—may be more stimulative of pleasant thought and fancy, may launch the mind on longer and more eventful voyages across the seas of memory, than can many an expensive and well-bound book. The catalogue itself is nothing; its strength is in its profusion of suggestions, of potentialities, of words that stand for facts. One is continually reminded. Reminded of what? Of a thousand things.

Roses, Roses

Keats has told us what Fancy can do (provided you have it) to alleviate a winter night—

“She will bring, in spite of frost,
Beauties that the earth hath lost.”

But if you have it not—if your own unaided resources are powerless in drear December to re-create the pomps of June—there is a sure passport to those joys. A catalogue of roses. The tender poetry, the rich extravagance, the warm enthusiasm of a rose-grower's list cannot miscarry. Wherever the eye alights it is gladdened. At the head of all—Abel Carrière: “Dark velvety crimson, with fiery red centre, perfect form, handsome foliage.” A line or so lower—Alfred Colomb: “Brilliant light scarlet crimson, large, full and globular, a magnificent rose of superb shape, very fragrant.” Ah, those Frenchmen! How is Monsieur Boncenne described? “Dark velvety crimson, superb, one of the best dark roses.” Could anything be better? we ask ourselves, and come forthwith upon the Baron de Bonstetten: “Velvety blackish crimson; an improved Monsieur Boncenne!” Thus the rose-grower lures one on; next year there will be an improved Baron de Bonstetten.

What must one do for one's own name to be

The Roll of Fame

whispered to the coming ages by the breath of a rose? In imperial action, to conquer the Soudan would seem to be not enough, for there is no bloom, free-flowing or rampant, velvety or superb, known as Lord Kitchener. There is, it is true, a Sir Herbert Kitchener chrysanthemum: "A very large Japanese, with very broad florets; bright golden chestnut bronze, with golden amber reverse florets, long and drooping, forming a very deep and graceful flower; one of the grandest novelties of the season." But the rose, the rose! How does one commend one's name to the grower of roses? One, apparently, need not be a professed lover of the flower, for Charles Lamb, who cared little for the garden, has the honour; and so has Socrates, who preferred hemlock. The Charles Lamb is "a soft cherry rose, very bright;" which sounds far more like Leigh Hunt. Socrates is "coppery bronze shaded with pink." Among other literary roses one finds Lord Macaulay, "variable, from scarlet crimson to rich plum;" Lord Bacon, "deep crimson, shaded with velvety black, blooming abundantly;" Charles Darwin, "a rich brownish crimson, perfectly reflexed and imbricated;" John Stuart Mill (a rose may bear any name), "a bright, clear red, beautiful form." But the mystery of rose-

Sweet French Names

christening is still thick. Why is there no Shakespeare, no Thackeray, and, especially, no Waller? There is a Dean Hole and an Alphonse Karr; but no Waller. Among the living the honour is given only to Royalty, to Mr. Robinson (as is fitting, although "Souvenir de William Robinson" has an odd sound), to statesmen, to warriors, and to enviable ladies.

But the sweetest names are the French: "Souvenir de Malmaison," "Camille de Rohan," "Eugène Verdier," "Victor Verdier," "Gloire de Dijon," "Maréchal Niel," "Maurice Bernardin," "Dupuy Jamain," "General Jacqueminot," "White Maman Cochet," "La Boule d'Or," "Perfection de Montplaisir," "Belle Lyonnaise," and "Souvenir d'un Ami." But best of all I think I like "Papa Gontier." What poignant memories must such names bring to the English exile in arid wastes abroad, in the Australian "Never Never" or the brumal fastnesses of the Yukon!

"These will bring, in spite of frost,
Beauties that the earth hath lost."

So also will the pages of a cricket outfitter's list; but whereas the poetry of the rose list is lyric, that of Wisden's is epic. The post brought me, one morning recently, a copy of *Wisden's Illustrated Catalogue*,

Old Cricket Bats

with its wonderful array of old, scarred, and honourable bats. They stand in eloquent pairs, two couples to the page; they are cracked and splintered and pegged and bound; and on each is the short and simple testimony of some mighty cricketer. Cricketers who write letters do not waste words. "The best bat I ever used," is the laconic tribute paid by poor George Ulyett of Sheffield to a "Crawford's Patent Exceller." Six words only, but how tremendous their force! The best bat ever used by that genial giant, now gone for ever, the hero of a thousand matches, the darling of Yorkshire's three ridings, and the terror of every other county. Turning on, you come upon a bruised and buffeted relic with several black bands. "This old bat," says the inscription, "has done wonderful service. I played with it both with Lord Sheffield's and Mr. Stoddart's teams, and three summers at home. It was the best bat I ever played with. In first-class cricket alone more than 3500 runs must have been made from it." And now it lies idle, resting until the day of dissolution. The writer of these words is Johnny Briggs. Turning on again, Brown's "grave-digger" is before you—the bat with which Brown of Driffild made his 140 for Mr. Stoddart's Australian team in

Sotheby's at Home

1895. "Brown often had a look at it when he was in London," says the catalogue. Had it been mine (and my runs) it should never have left my possession. But cricketers are more generous than ordinary persons.

To certain temperaments a mere list of roses would, in default of the flowers themselves, be more satisfying than a description of those flowers from the pen of the richest writer—the pen of, say, Miss Corelli. The catalogue, so to speak, touches the button, and you yourself do the rest. It is automatic literature. Sometimes a catalogue far transcends the event. Compare with the noise and unrest of the auction-room the quiet pencilling of a book-sale inventory secure in an arm-chair. Again, the compiler of catalogues (such is human optimism) is rarely a realist; he prefers to overlook blemishes and fractures, stains and incompleteness. Thus, to the arm-chaired student of the list every book is fair and uncropped, whereas the purchaser may have many imperfections beneath his faltering eye. Similarly, there are programmes which are more alluring than the performances to which they point. Many persons on a return visit to Barnum's must have found the welter of superlatives in Olympia's astound-

Ainsworth's Lost Hold

ing official pamphlet a good substitute for feats which familiarity had rendered unexciting. The gentleman, for instance, who curled himself in a metal ball and rolled himself to the summit of a spiral staircase could surprise but once, whereas the adjectives employed to describe his achievement surprised continually. There are novels (in the halfpenny papers) more interesting in the synopsis than the narrative, and there are many stories more notable in their chapter headings than in themselves—Ainsworth's, for example. I never tire of reading his full-bodied promises: "How Queen Mary visited the Lions' Tower; how Magog gave his dame a lesson; and how Xit conquered a monkey and was worsted by a bear;" "How the Princess Elizabeth was confronted by Sir Thomas Wyatt in the torture chamber"—these are ever interesting; but with the text of *The Tower of London* I have, I feel certain, done for ever.

A like pleasure may come from the table of contents in a collection of poetry, but particularly from an index of first lines. I remember once picking up the publisher's circular of one of Mr. Bullen's volumes, *Lyrics from the Song-Books of the Elizabethan Age*, and being almost as much fascinated by the

The Elizabethans

index of first lines which it contained as afterwards by the poems in their entirety. Indeed, in several cases the first line is more satisfying than the complete lyric, for the Elizabethans had a special genius for beginnings. In the first line the great poet and little poet may meet on common ground; it is only in the sequel that they are distinguished, and you learn which has the finer note, which the true staying power. On the threshold there is equality. "There is a garden in her face;" "A little, pretty, bonnie lass was walking;" "Come, sorrow, come, sit down and mourn with me;" "Lie down, poor heart, and die awhile for grief;" "My thoughts are winged with hopes, my hopes with love;" "The cypress curtain of the night is spread;" "Arise, my thoughts, and mount you with the sun;" "Care for thy soul as thing of greatest price"—these are a few of the circular's first lines; and each one makes even a prosaic man something of a poet by mere incitement to him to speculate as to the issue.

To a mind at all active or curious an odd number of Dr. Wright's *English Dialect Dictionary* is intensely absorbing. For solace less academical there is an artless and unexact paper which can impart more delight than anything produced by the

For Long Journeys

deliberate fusion of Fleet Street intellects. This is the sturdy little catalogue of wants and redundancies called *The Bazaar*—or rather, *The Exchange and Mart*, for *The Bazaar* is the paper proper, which is little; while *The Exchange and Mart* is its advertisement supplement, which is everything. Like a flourishing rose on an insignificant manetti stock, the supplement puts forth the blossoms, while the parent unobtrusively avoids the eye. These blossoms have a variety of which one cannot tire. Advertisers from every part of the United Kingdom meet there to accommodate each other. Magic lanterns are offered for guinea-pigs, bicycles as good as new for sitting hens, complete sets of the *Penny Encyclopædia* for double-barrelled guns, old Broadwoods for young spaniels. One need require nothing oneself to find amusement in the desiderata of others. On a railway journey one reads and reads, knowing neither fatigue nor satiety; section gives way to section, and the miles are eaten up until the haven is reached and real life substituted for the half-life of the train. Taken from beginning to end, *The Exchange and Mart* will last you from St. Pancras to York, from Exeter to Paddington, from London Bridge to Charing Cross. It is the best railway reading.

Country Life

Kindred pleasure may be extracted from the illustrated advertisements of houses in the paper called *Country Life*. It is nothing that one's own belongings are permanently settled in a London street; this need not diminish fascinated interest in eligible manor-houses in Surrey or unique moated granges in Kent. You can still choose or reject—the unassailable privilege of the reader of catalogues. “Too damp” is one; “Too overgrown,” another; and “I don’t much care for that gable,” you say of a third. And then comes the ideal. “What is the agent’s address? Oh, well, perhaps it doesn’t matter. . . .” An author must be successful indeed if his local colour can so bring the country before one as these pages of photographs can.

Of the delectation which accompanies the leisurely examination, pencil in hand, of a second-hand book-seller’s list, something has just been said. In the recesses of an arm-chair one can become, in fancy, the owner of first folios without even the exertion of nodding. “Gerard’s *Herbal*, £2?” “Yes, I may as well have that;” and the proprietary cross springs into being on the margin. “Dame Juliana Berners’ *Boke of St Albans*?” “And I will have that too”—another cross. “John Florio’s *Montaigne*, quarto?”

Books for Spain

"Ah! at last!" And so one goes on. What it is like actually to buy from Mr. Quaritch's list I have no notion. Such purchases as I have made of that great man (now, alas! no more) were carried through one-sidedly, in a not strictly commercial manner, for the library of a castle on the other side of the Pyrenees; hence I can speak only as a poor man. A poor man with a book catalogue is a feasting Barmecide, yet without his haste to despatch the meal. Or, rather, he is as one who through the panes of a sealed window watches without envy a procession of those dishes of which he may not partake. Without envy; for, if covetousness at all worthy the name takes part in his feelings, he can never know the enjoyment of catalogues to the full. A mild, well-ordered inclination (to add sauce to the perusal) may be his, but nothing more; he must be utterly without rancour that others are richer than he.

Clothes Old and New ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪

IT is a curious experience to walk, as I did recently, behind a man dressed in one's old suit. You have a vision of yourself, or, if you will, a glimpse of your double, a reminder that you are not everybody. This being the first time I had seen the suit from the back, a vague sense of familiarity preceded recognition, and then, looking steadfastly on its pattern, I remembered how kindly and liberal a coat it was, and how easy and unconstrained all movements of limb had been in it, and how many years it still had before it, and I perceived sorrowfully that I had given away as noble a set of hartogs as man ever possessed. This proves how careful we should be in parting with cast-off suits. Thoreau affirmed that old clothes should be burnt: and, from the point of view of those who hold that attire ought to be autobiographical, this is true; for how can tweeds handed

Coats of Fur

on from one man to another continue to be autobiographical? But Thoreau's contention was a counsel of perfection—that is to say, advice for Thoreaus—and, moreover, so few persons have autobiographies that we may as well persevere in the bestowal of old clothes.

Of all old clothes, none wears so sorry an air as the old fur-lined coat. A new fur-lined coat is magnificent. It is a symbol of luxury, the antithesis of the hair shirt. It is more than a garment, it is a fortification. An Englishman's fur coat is his castle. But when decay has set in, when it is partly bald and entirely weather-worn, then the fur coat is the wretchedest object in civilisation. It is not good even for charades; although, in its luxuriant days, how versatile it was! From time to time it had been (inside out) most of the larger animals in the Zoo. Such versatility, indeed, has the fur coat that on the night of a children's party the prudent father turns the key upon it. Fur-lined coats never become har-togs; nor do overcoats. These, therefore, may be given away or sold without heart-flutterings; although the ordinary overcoat should not be parted with lightly. An old overcoat is a good fellow to accompany one to sea, to wear on deck on rough or rainy

“Hartogs”

nights. But, strictly speaking, no overcoat becomes a hartog.

And what, I seem to hear you ask, what are hartogs? Old clothes that are less imposing and more comfortable than any others are hartogs. To be old is not sufficient; nor is it enough that they are easy. To be hartogs they must combine both these merits. Good clothes when they grow baggy and faded become hartogs; bad clothes, never. Inferior and ill-fitting clothes become merely “old clo.” The derivation of hartogs is a secret; but all philologists, and all who, like R. L. Stevenson, have a “love of lovely words,” will recognise in the term a neologue of singular fitness and attraction. Think about it for a minute or two, and you will realise that clothes of the kind described above could not possibly be known in any other way. They are hartogs—just hartogs, and nothing else. Old clothes of the common type one thinks of without affection, but hartogs are beloved. Anything is good enough to cover nakedness; hartogs do more—they confer cheerfulness and irresponsibility, they fit the wearer for a freer life. Yet it must be understood that hartogs are never absolutely disreputable, never so old that one cannot meet the vicar’s wife without shame.

Companionable Coats

In ordinary life the wearer of hartogs disdains coats and mackintoshes, except in extreme stress of weather. It is the winds and rains of heaven and the might of the sun that have made his hartogs what they are ; the indoor life produces a very inferior result. The best hartogs are stamped by the universe itself. They are the garb of the wise traveller. You meet hartogs on Helvellyn and among the Langdale Pikes ; you recognise them in the Black Forest and on the Furka ; you are aware of them in the Trossachs and beneath the smooth rotundities and swelling undulations of the South Downs. Nature's best lovers woo her in hartogs.

This definition should be exhaustive enough, but still a little may be added. It should be said, for instance, that few women have enough courage to achieve hartogs. The mass dare not. There are also men who dare not, and there are men whose position is against it. Bishops probably have no hartogs.

Of all hartogs the coat is the most dearly prized. One does not feel so affectionately towards a waistcoat : little is lovable about a waistcoat ; but a coat becomes a friend, a brother. Men have worn coats for decades. A satisfying coat is worth its weigh'

Boots

in platinum, because it is so rare. The waistcoat is within the compass of any tailor; but a coat is different. Nothing is quite so disgusting as the determination of one's tailor to have his own way in the matter of the coat. You order a dozen personal touches; you stipulate for no pads in the shoulders; for a deep collar, to turn up in wet or cold; for extra pockets inside; for no lining in the back; for no fashionable antics in the cutting. And the tailor smiles and smiles. None the less is he a villain, for when the coat comes home it is precisely what you struggled to make certain it should not be. A tailor who will obey to the letter is more than rubies. Hence the lovableness of a truly good coat.

Hats are lovable too. Boots, however, are too transient to be loved. One dares not love them. At the most a pair of boots can be hartogs for a year. Boots seem to me civilisation's most conspicuous failure: they pinch, they cramp, they mar, they have every tightness but water-tightness; they are hot in summer and cold in winter; they have no durability; they are costly. They make it almost worth while to have one's feet amputated early in life. Lord Erskine said it was comforting to remember that when the hour came for all secrets to be revealed, then, at length, we

Flannel

should learn why shoes are always made too tight. And yet what is to be done? To go barefoot is, after all these ages of shoe-leather, impossible, and sandals are chilly and socialistic. Indoors, of course, there are slippers, and latterly a very excellent kind devised of felt has been obtainable. But no good work, it has been said, has ever been done in slippers, and certainly no good walking. For outdoor life in this mutable England we have yet to discover the fitting boot. The quest of it is the business of a lifetime : a man may be said never to come within measurable distance of being well shod until he has one foot in the grave.

In winter there is nothing more comfortable than hartogs ; but in summer flannels supersede them. Buoyancy, liberty, the power to do—these are put on with flannels. Flannels are as levelling almost as nakedness. On the cricket field all men are equal. Has not Lees bowled Lord Hawke these many seasons? and I doubt not but he would york even the Prince of Wales. But once, in appearance at any rate, there were distinctions. In the old days, when George Parr hit to long-leg for six, and George Freeman bowled like lightning, flannels were a distinguishing sign. In those days the professional was marked

Newspaper Clothes

by his dress for the dependant he was. He wore a coloured shirt, and his whites were not white. You may see them in old photographs. My earliest recollection of county cricket is a Sussex and Surrey match twenty-five years ago ; and I remember distinctly that Pooley's flannels were yellow, Jupp's grey. But now, except in a few cases, there is nothing but initials to distinguish the two classes of cricketers. A change has come over the professional, and his flannels shine like an amateur's. A stranger would find it impossible to pick out the unpaid from the paid. Professionals even wear ties, a thing unheard of in the 'sixties and not to be endured. Yet this new sartorial complexion which the game wears is good, for it emphasises the socialism of cricket.

The opponents of the press ought to bear it in mind that no substitute for clothing is more effective than a newspaper—that is to say, no sudden substitute. An American enthusiast, who recently walked round the world for a wager, wore only a 'copy of the *New York Herald* until he had amassed, by exhibiting himself, enough money to buy clothes ; and now and then come tidings of a party of tourists who have escaped from the attentions of Italian banditti or Hungarian brigands in nothing more substantial than last week's

Canon Smith's Prayer

Times. It seems to be established that when in difficulties for clothes the first thought of civilised man is for a newspaper ; just as the first thought of primitive man was for a leaf. Not the least funny story in that diverting book, *Many Cargoes*, tells of a captain who lost his "cloes at cribbage," and was found the next day by his rescuer "in a pair of socks and last week's paper." This, as we have seen, is not a particularly novel position, but what distinguished Captain Bross from his companions in this form of misfortune was his occupation. When discovered he was "reading the advertisements." That is true philosophy. The completest deshable is obtainable in the tropics. The late Henry Drummond once wrote home from Central Africa that he had nothing on but a helmet and three mosquitoes. Sydney Smith, who was the first man to pray in August for the power to take off his flesh and sit in his bones (a blessed condition, which, on paper at least, has been made possible by Professor Röntgen), described the height of bliss attainable by a Sierra Leone native, as sitting in one-half of a melon, with the other half on his head, eating the pulp.

Of all men, tramps and peers care least about their appearance. This indifference to public opinion of one's clothes is indeed an enviable state to reach. I

Dean Stanley's Collar

have always liked the story of the old fellow who at home dressed badly because everyone knew him, and badly when he travelled because no one knew him. He was one of the few men who have had courage to dress to please themselves. Most of us dress to please other persons ; and even then, it must be added, rarely succeed. A distinguished statesman objected on principle to make himself uncomfortable by dressing for dinner, but he had a very charming way of disarming criticism and propitiating his hostess. He had upstairs, he would assure her, an excellent dress suit for which he had paid a high price, and if it would be any satisfaction to the company, his secretary would bring it down and display it. But one has to be a Cabinet Minister to carry off such an idiosyncrasy as this. At many dinner-parties the guests have been asked as much on account of their clothes as their wit—the man without a wedding garment in the parable apparently had no compensating distinction of intellect. A good dinner-story tells how Dean Stanley once arrived at table with one side of his collar flapping in the air. During the meal his hostess asked him if he was aware of its condition, and if he would like any assistance in rectifying it. "Oh no," he replied genially ; "it broke while I was

The Clothes of Women.

dressing. I don't mind. Do you?" These are the great men.

Of the clothes of women I know little, except that the fashions often change too quickly, and it seems very hard for some girls to dress in such a way as to satisfy their elder sisters. I have also noticed that after she has become engaged a girl gets more critical of her brother's clothes. She has acquired a standard.

From a Seaside Diary ~ ~ ~ ~

WHEN August comes it is time for the sea. An island race, it behoves us to roll our bodies in the waves for at any rate two weeks in the year. The salt invigorates, purifies. In August, unless you have a river, the country stifles, desiccates ; one's blood ceases to flow, the brain is dulled, the limbs lag. The sea changes all this.



I like no strange children so much as seaside children : the jolly girls in Tam o' Shanters who are still in the boy stage—throwing balls, playing cricket, riding astride—and yet are women too, as all girls are, even in the cradle ; the brown-armed, fair-haired boys who never wear shoes or stockings, who dive off the groynes, and push out the boats, and pull in the nets,

Sunday Afternoon

and help the shrimpers, and always get the front seats at the entertainments. I like their eagerness, their impatience, their air of business. I like their voices especially. You meet them all day long, always intent and purposeful—always, I suppose, making for a meal, or a conjuror, or a towel, or some money to pay for something. They never seem to want to go on the sea or on the pier; they live on the sands, ever, like Matthew Arnold's thrush, deep in their unknown day's employ.

That is during the week; but then comes Sunday—our woeful English Sunday, and all their happy routine is upset. Sunday afternoon in the country can be circumvented; but Sunday afternoon is an irremediable trial for children by the sea. I am writing these lines on Sunday afternoon at an open window overlooking the beach, and the prospect is melancholy. The sun is shining, the sands are wide and smooth, the tide (as it always is on Sunday) is still far out, but not a single bare leg can be seen. Instead, just below me, are two boys carefully dressed, with black coats and creased trousers, who throw stones at a stick—that being one of the permissible Sunday afternoon employments; while another boy, who yesterday, wearing only white knickerbockers

Little Girls

and a vest, was pushing us from the beach towards a little sailing boat, is now drifting aimlessly up and down the road, spotless and uncomfortable in an Eton jacket and a collar four inches wide. Other figures, dejected and idle, in the distance, denote the profitless inertia ordained as the right way to spend a fine Sunday afternoon. The morning is more easily got through: there is preparing for church, walking to church, returning from church. But the afternoon—— If I had a family I would remember my youth and its monotonies, and bid Sundays cease at one o'clock.



Watering-places without sands belong to the adult, but where there are sands the adult is eliminated except as a servant of the young—a boatman, a donkey man, a father with money, a mother with a lunch-basket, a nurse with a towel.

After careful study I have come to the conclusion that the little girl derives more pleasure from the sands than the little boy. It is the little girl who rules here. Paddling provides her with just as much excitement and unusualness as she wants; give her a spade and a pail and bare her legs, and she is happy. The boy wants a little more: he cannot forget that danger is

Ercles' Vein

part of his heritage ; he wants to be in the distant boats ; he wants to catch large fish.

And this reminds me of a comedy involving two little girls and one little boy, which has given me much pleasure. The little girls were making a sand castle on an ambitious scale, when the little boy, a total stranger, walked up to them, said it was his territory, said he would "crack their two heads together like nuts," said he would "break their foreheads," drove them off with kicks, and assumed possession. That is the first act. They hurried home in tears to complain of the enormity, and nothing was heard for some time but the arrogance and selfishness of Stanley—that being his name.

Act two occurred the day after, when an expedition was made to some rocks. But here I must resort to dialogue.

First little girl (suddenly): "Look, there's that horrid Stanley."

Second little girl: "Where? So he is. I wonder what he's doing?"

They advance cautiously in a blend of curiosity and fear.

Stanley (seeing them): "Hullo!"

Both little girls: "Hullo!"

Sea Music

First little girl : "What are you doing?"

Stanley : "Catching crabs. You may come and watch me if you like."

Both little girls, completely won by his condescension and affability, hurry to his side.

Stanley : "I've caught thirty-six already ; once I caught a salmon." (And much more in the same vein.)

Both little girls return fascinated by this new hero. Now they are warm friends.



We are not on any railway ; to get to the nearest town we must either take a motor 'bus with an alarming amount of top hamper, or a steamer. Indeed, at the moment I write we have no choice but the steamer, for the motor 'bus caught fire yesterday, and is not yet cool enough to resume its duties. Every house and cottage contain two or three families besides that which belongs to them, and sleeps Heaven knows where, and every family has one piano and two pianists. Hence there is no tune now in vogue that I do not know, but I know none so well as "Hiawatha" and "Lead, Kindly Light," the two melodies (designed for opposite tastes) with which

Our Joey

the most persistent of our visiting organs is furnished. We also have companies of strolling players in the evenings—Follies and Pierrots, Vagabonds and Non-descripts—and by day such odd stray entertainers as niggers ; an old, old, and I am sure very wicked man who extricates himself from a network of knotted rope, and looks far liker a venerable lay preacher ; a humorist on high stilts with a mysterious way of catching pennies in a hat, and an irresistible way or compelling us to throw more ; and this morning a fisherman from Great Yarmouth with a tame seal.

This is the best of our visitors so far. I always knew that seals were very wonderful creatures, capable of a cleverness for which we are at pains to find no more vivid epithet than "human," and full of quiet fun ; but not until I studied Joey, the seal in the box, did I realise how friendly and companionable these animals can be. Their eyes are more brilliant and quite as sympathetic and intelligent as any dog's ; their countenances are far more alert and expressively conscious of their surroundings • and their skin is the most exquisite smooth silver grey. Some day I must have a seal. The fisherman in whose net Joey one day found himself has a pleasant humour and what seems to be a genuine affection for his captive, and

Explaining the Seal

Joey, although the freedom of the North Sea may sometimes be regretted, gives every indication of enjoying contact with men and children. One of his feats is to scratch the heads of little boys. "Flea in de boy's head, Joey, flea in de boy's head," is his master's formula. Adding, "I will now explain de seal." Think of the arrogance of a man who would explain the seal—that miracle of swiftness and animation, part beast, part fish, and all a delight. But this Yarmouth fisherman has no hesitancy. "I will now explain de seal," he says, and does it—a hundred and more times a day. We know its woof and texture.

Fires



"Oh, pile a bright fire!"

Edward FitzGerald.

A FRIEND of mine making a list of the things needed for the cottage that he had taken, put at the head "bellows." Then he thought for some minutes, and was found merely to have added "tongs" and "poker." Then he asked someone to finish it. A fire, indeed, furnishes. Nothing else, not even a chair, is absolutely necessary; and it is difficult for a fire to be too large. Some of the grates put into modern houses by the jerry-builders would move an Elizabethan to tears, so petty and mean are they, and so incapable of radiation. We English people would suffer no loss in kindness and tolerance were the ingle-nook restored to our homes. The ingle humanises.

Although the father of the family no longer, as in ancient Greece, performs on the hearth religious rites,

Fireside Poems

yet it is still a sacred spot. Lovers whisper there, and there friends exchange confidences. Husband and wife face the fire hand in hand. The table is for wit and good humour, the hearth is for something deeper and more personal. The wisest counsels are offered beside the fire, the most loving sympathy and comprehension are there made explicit. It is the scene of the best dual companionship. The fire itself is a friend, having the prime attribute—warmth. One of the most human passages of that most human poem, *The Deserted Village*, tells how the wanderer was now and again taken by the memory of the hearth of his distant home :—

“ I still had hopes my latest hours to crown,
Amidst these humble bowers to lay me down. . . .
Around my fire an evening group to draw,
And tell of all I felt, and all I saw. . . .”

Only by the fireside could a man so unbosom himself. A good fire extracts one's best ; it will not be resisted. FitzGerald's "Meadows in Spring" contains some of the best fireside stanzas :—

“ Then with an old friend
I talk of our youth—
How 'twas gladsome, but often
Foolish, forsooth :
But gladsome, gladsome !

Ghost Stories

Or to get merry
We sing some old rhyme,
That made the wood ring again
In summer time—
Sweet summer time!

Then we go to drinking,
Silent and snug;
Nothing passes between us
Save a brown jug—
Sometimes!

And sometimes a tear
Will rise in each eye,
Seeing the two old friends
So merrily—
So merrily!"

The hearth also is for ghost stories; indeed, a ghost story demands a fire. If England were warmed wholly by hot-water pipes or gas stoves, the Society for Psychical Research would be dissolved. Gas stoves are poor comforters. They heat the room, it is true, but they do so after a manner of their own, and there they stop. For encouragement, for inspiration, you seek the gas stove in vain. Who could be witty, who could be humane, before a gas stove? It does so little for the eye and nothing for the imagination; its flame is so artificial and restricted a thing, its glowing heart so shallow and ungenerous. It has

Many Coals

no voice, no personality, no surprises ; it submits to the control of a gas company, which, in its turn, is controlled by Parliament. Now, a fire proper has nothing to do with Parliament. A fire proper has whims, ambitions, and impulses unknown to gas-burners, undreamed of by asbestos. Yet even the gas stove has advantages and merits when compared with hot-water pipes. The gas stove at least offers a focus for the eye, unworthy though it be ; and you can make a semicircle of good people before it. But with hot-water pipes not even that is possible. From the security of ambush they merely heat, and heat whose source is invisible is hardly to be coveted at all. Moreover, the heat of hot-water pipes is but one remove from stuffiness.

Coals are a perpetual surprise, for no two consignments burn exactly alike. There is one variety that does not burn—it explodes. This kind comes mainly from the slate quarries, and, we must believe, reaches the coal merchant by accident. Few accidents, however, occur so frequently. Another variety, found in its greatest perfection in railway waiting-rooms, does everything but emit heat. A third variety jumps and burns the hearthrug. One can predicate nothing definite concerning a new load of coal at any time,

The Bedroom Fire

least of all if the consignment was ordered to be "exactly like the last."

A true luxury is a fire in the bedroom. This is fire at its most fanciful and mysterious. One lies in bed watching drowsily the play of the flames, the flicker of the shadows. The light leaps up and hides again, the room gradually becomes peopled with fantasies. Now and then a coal drops and accentuates the silence. Movement with silence is one of the curious influences that come to us: hence, perhaps, part of the fascination of the cinematoscope, wherein trains rush into stations, and streets are seen filled with hurrying people and bustling vehicles, and yet there is no sound save the clicking of the mechanism. With a fire in one's bedroom sleep comes witchingly.

Another luxury is reading by firelight, but this is less to the credit of the fire than the book. An author must have us in no uncertain grip when he can induce us to read him by a light so impermanent as that of the elfish coal. Nearer and nearer to the page grows the bended head, and nearer and nearer to the fire moves the book. Boys and girls love to read lying full length on the hearthrug.

Some people maintain a fire from January to December; and, indeed, the days on which a ruddy

The Gipsy's Fire

grate offends are very few. According to Mortimer Collins, out of the three hundred and sixty-five days that make up the year only on the odd five is a fire quite dispensable. A perennial fire is, perhaps, luxury writ large. The very fact that sunbeams falling on the coals dispirit them to greyness and ineffectual pallor seems to prove that when the sun rides high it is time to have done with fuel except in the kitchen or in the open air.

The fire in the open air is indeed joy perpetual, and there is no surer way of renewing one's youth than by kindling and tending it, whether it be a rubbish fire for potatoes, or an aromatic offering of pine spindles and fir cones, or the scientific structure of the gipsy to heat a tripod-swung kettle. The gipsy's fire is a work of art. "Two short sticks were stuck in the ground, and a third across to them like a triangle. Against this frame a number of the smallest and driest sticks were leaned, so that they made a tiny hut. Outside these there was a second layer of longer sticks, all standing, or rather leaning, against the first. If a stick is placed across, lying horizontally, supposing it catches fire, it just burns through the middle and that is all, the ends go out. If it is stood nearly upright, the flame draws up to it; it is certain to catch, burns

Old Wood

longer, and leaves a good ember." So wrote one who knew—Richard Jefferies, in *Bevis*, that epic of boyhood. Having built the fire, the next thing is to light it. An old gipsy woman can light a fire in a gale, just as a sailor can always light his pipe, even in the cave of Æolus; but the amateur is less dexterous. The smoke of the open-air fire is charged with memory. One whiff of it, and for a swift moment we are in sympathy with our remotest ancestors, and all that is elemental and primitive in us is awakened.

An American poet, R. H. Messinger, wrote—

"Old wood to burn!—
Ay, bring the hillside beech
From where the owlets meet and screech,
And ravens croak;
The crackling pine, and cedar sweet;
Bring, too, a clump of fragrant peat,
Dug 'neath the fern;
The knotted oak,
A faggot, too, perhaps,
Whose bright flame, dancing, winking,
Shall light us at our drinking;
While the oozing sap
Shall make sweet music to our thinking."

There is no fire of coals, not even the blacksmith's, that can compare with the blazing fire of wood. The wood fire is primeval. Centuries before coals were

Irish Holly

dreamed of, our rude forefathers were cooking their meat and gaining warmth from burning logs.

Coal is modern, decadent. Look at this passage concerning fuel from an old Irish poem :—"O man," begins the lay, "that for Fergus of the feasts does kindle fire, whether afloat or ashore never burn the kindle of woods. . . . The pliant woodbine, if thou burn, wailings for misfortunes will abound; dire extremity at weapons' points or drowning in great waves will come after thee. Burn not the precious apple tree." The minstrel goes on to name wood after wood that may or may not be burned. This is the crowning passage :—"Fiercest heat-giver of all timber is green oak, from him none may escape unhurt; by partiality for him the head is set on aching, and by his acrid embers the eye is made sore. Alder, very battle-witch of all woods, tree that is hottest in the fight—undoubtedly burn at thy discretion both the alder and the white thorn. Holly, burn it green; holly, burn it dry; of all trees whatsoever the critically best is holly." Could anyone write with this enthusiasm and poetic feeling about Derby Brights and Silkstone—even the best Silkstone and the best Derby Brights?

The care of a wood fire is, in itself, daily work for

The Log

a man ; for far more so than with coal is progress continuous. Something is always taking place and demanding vigilance—hence the superiority of a wood fire as a beguiling influence. The bellows must always be near at hand, the tongs not out of reach ; both of them more sensible implements than those that usually appertain to coals. The tongs have no pretensions to brightness and gentility ; the bellows, quite apart from their function in life, are a thing of beauty ; the fire-dogs, on whose backs the logs repose, are fine upstanding fellows ; and the bricks on which the fire is laid have warmth and simplicity and a hospitable air to which decorative tiles can never attain. Again, there is about the logs something cleanly, in charming contrast to the dirt of coal. The wood hails from the neighbouring coppice. You have watched it grow : your interest in it is personal, and its interest in you is personal. It is as keen to warm you as you are to be warmed. Now there is nothing so impersonal as a piece of coal. Moreover, this wood was cut down and brought to the door by some good-humoured countryman of your acquaintance, whereas coal is obtained by miners—bad-tempered, truculent fellows that strike. Who ever heard of a strike among coppicers ? And the smoke from a wood

"Snowbound" Again

fire!—clean and sweet and pungent, and, against dark foliage, exquisite in colour as the breast of a dove. The delicacy of its grey-blue is not to be matched.

Whittier's "Snow Bound" is the epic of the wood-piled hearth. Throughout we hear the crackling of the brush, the hissing of the sap. The texture of the fire was "the oaken log, green, huge, and thick," and "rugged brush":—

"Hovering near,
We watched the first red blaze appear,
Heard the sharp crackle, caught the gleam
On whitewashed wall and sagging beam,
Until the old, rude-furnished room
Burst flower-like into rosy bloom."

That italicised line—my own italics—is good. For the best fire (as for the best celery)—the fire most hearty, most inspired, and inspiring—frost is needed. When old Jack is abroad and there is a breath from the east in the air, then the sparks fly and the coals glow. In moist and mild weather the fire only burns, it has no enthusiasm for combustion. Whittier gives us a snowstorm:—

"Shut in from all the world without,
We sat the clean-winged hearth about,
Content to let the north wind roar
In baffled rage at pane and door,

Mock Inferno

While the red logs before us beat
The frost line back with tropic heat ;
And ever, when a louder blast
Shook beam and rafter as it passed,
The merrier up its roaring draught
The great throat of the chimney laughed."

But the wood fire is not for all. In London it is impracticable ; the builder has set his canon against it. Let us, then—those of us who are able to—build our coal fires the higher, and flourish in their kindly light. Whether one is alone or in company, the fire is potent to cheer. Indeed, a fire *is* company. No one need fear to be alone if the grate but glows. Faces in the fire will smile at him, mock him, frown at him, call and repulse ; or, if there be no faces, the smoke will take a thousand shapes and lead his thoughts by delightful paths to the land of reverie ; or he may watch the innermost heart of the fire burn blue (especially if there is frost in the air) ; or, poker in hand, he may coax a coal into increased vivacity. This is an agreeable diversion, suggesting the mediæval idea of the Devil in his domain.

The Post ◡ ◡ ◡ ◡ ◡ ◡

NOW that four ounces of letter go for a penny, the complexities of life are almost over. In the old days, in the absence of a letter-balance, to decide upon the weight of an envelope was a matter involving the judgment of the whole household. One method of computing it was to hold the envelope in one hand, and an ounce of tobacco in the other ; but that was not impeccable. Another was to employ the kitchen scales, which unhappily are often superior to mere accuracy, or they decline to be put in motion by anything less than a quarter of a pound. To-day, when a quarter of a pound is the standard, all such anxiety is past. Still, it is distressing to think how few people keep letter scales. There positively are houses which possess three bicycles and a typewriter, but no letter scales. On the other hand, there also are

Every Postal Requisite

houses where every postal requisite is prominent. Every postal requisite means a little leather box from Bond Street, with "Stamps" in gold on the lid and two cedarwood compartments within for penny and halfpenny stamps ; a stick of sealing wax and a seal ; a leather box of string, also from Bond Street, armed with a tiny pair of scissors, so small that no normal fingers can hold them ; a Postal Guide ; letter scales ; a wet pad for stamp-moistening, which is almost always overlooked until the tongue has done its work ; and a photograph of Mr. Henniker Heaton, M.P. In such houses it is very hard to write letters.

The late Lewis Carroll once invented a stamp case—"The Wonderland"—and to accompany it he wrote a little pamphlet containing "Eight or Nine Wise Words about Letter Writing." As the unmethodical could not have a better guide they should at once acquire both pamphlet and case. "The Queen's laundress," Lewis Carroll assures us, "uses no other." Here are portions of some of these counsels :—"If the Letter is to be in answer to another, begin by getting out that other letter and reading it through, in order to refresh your memory as to what it is you have to answer, and as to your correspondent's *present address*. . . . Next, *address and stamp the Envelope*.

Lewis Carroll

'What! Before writing the *Letter*?' Most certainly. And I'll tell you what will happen if you don't. You will go on writing till the last moment, and, just in the middle of the last sentence, you will become aware that 'time's up!'" The methodical, of course, have no need of such hints; but as most of us are otherwise a few more rules may be quoted:—"Don't fill *more* than a page and a half with apologies for not having written sooner! . . . *Write legibly*. . . . *Don't repeat yourself*. . . . When your letter is finished, read it carefully through, and put in any 'not' that you may chance to have omitted. (This precaution will sometimes save you from saying what you had not quite intended: *e.g.* suppose you had *meant* to write, 'Dear Sir, I am not prepared to accept the offer you make me of your hand and heart.') When you say, in your letter, 'I enclose £5 banknote,' or, 'I enclose John's letter for you to see,' get the document referred to—and *put it into the envelope*. Otherwise, you are pretty certain to find it lying about, *after the Post has gone!*" And again:—"If it should ever occur to you to write, jestingly, in *dispraise* of your friend, be sure you exaggerate enough to make the jesting *obvious*: a word, spoken in *jest*, but taken as *earnest*, may lead to very serious consequences. I have

“Conceited Letters”

known it to lead to the breaking-off of a friendship. Suppose, for instance, you wish to remind your friend of a sovereign you have lent him, which he has forgotten to repay—you might quite *mean* the words, ‘I mention it, as you seem to have a conveniently bad memory for debts,’ in jest; yet there would be nothing to wonder at if he took offence at that way of putting it. But suppose you wrote, ‘Long observation of your career as a pickpocket has convinced me that my only hope for recovering that sovereign I lent you, is to say, “Pay up, or I’ll summons yer!”’ he would indeed be a matter-of-fact friend if he took *that* as seriously meant!”

Lewis Carroll did not, however, offer a specimen letter as model. Here he sadly neglected his opportunities. There are publications which repair this omission with examples calculated to cover most of our commoner epistolary needs, but for ordinary life their language is a thought too stiff. In a much earlier compilation of a similar kind the language had other faults—a manual which appeared in 1618, the production either of the versatile Gervase Markham or of another man with the same initials. Its title is, “Conceited Letters Newly Laid Open, or, A Most Excellent Bundle of New Wit: wherein is knit

The Happily Obsolete

up together all the perfections, or Art of Episteling, by which the most ignorant may with much modesty talke and argue with the best learned. A Worke varying from the Nature of former Presidents." This slender black-letter volume contains a number of letters couched in a style which it is perhaps well to have superseded. The specimens given are brief, but that they also are comprehensive may be gathered from the two that follow :—

A LETTER TO A FRIEND FOR HIS OPINION IN DIVERS POINTS OF CONSIDERATIONS.

"MY HONEST NED,—I pray thee write mee word by this bearer how thou doest, thy opinion of the World, of life and death, honesty and wit, and what comes into thy head when thou hast leisure to be idle. I long to heare from thee, to reade thy conceits, which, if they be of the old fashion, are better than the new forme : be what will be, to me it shall be welcome, and thyselfe, better whensoever I may see thee : for dull wits and addle heads so beate about the Market in this Towne, that I had rather goe a mile wide than keepe way with such wilde Geese : and so loath to trouble thee with trifling newes, to no good purpose, in the affection of a faithful heart : I rest,—Thine, not nine,
"T. N."

A Bad Letter

This is the suggested reply :—

“KINDE HENRY,—To answere thy request, in a few words let me tell thee, for the World, I finde it a walke that soone wearieth a good spirit, this life is but a puffe, and Death but an abridgement of Time. Now for some notes I have taken of the World, and divers things in it : let me tell thee, that if all the wealth in the World were in one chest it would not buy one houre of Life ; if all the honesty of the world were in one heart, it would not buy one bit of Bread ; and if all the wit in the world were in one wicked pate, it would not buy one jot of grace : and therefore it is meete with Death at a meaner price, and to carry Money with Honesty, the better to goe to Market, and to joyne Grace with Wit, to find the high-way to Heaven. This is all for this time I have had leasure to thinke upon, as more comes into my Head, I will make you acquainted with it ; in the meantime, marke what I have written, and it will doe thee no hurt in reading : Farewell.—Thine, or not mine owne,

T. R.”

It is comfortable to think that people no longer write letters like that.

When it comes to practical counsel, the last stanza of one of the poems of Mrs. Elizabeth Turner, an ancient preceptor of the young, and a Socratic dialogue between Robert Robinson of Cambridge and his little

Betsy's Lesson

daughter Betsy, offer as good instruction in correspondence that can be given.

This is the dialogue, as given in George Dyer's *Life of Robinson*, who was a great man. Betsy had declared she could not possibly write a letter to her brother.

Robinson. Shall I write for you?

Betsy. Oh yes, I wish you would.

R. Well, get me some pen, ink, and paper. [The child brings them.] Now, it must be your letter. I give you the use of my hand; but you must tell me what to say.

B. But I don't know.

R. You don't know!—though you love your brother so much! Shall I find something for you?

B. Oh yes! pray do.

R. Well, then, let's see: Dear Tommy—Last night the house was burnt down from top to bottom.

B. No, don't say that!

R. Why not?

B. 'Cause it isn't true.

R. What! you have learned you mustn't write what's not true. I am glad you have learned so much. Stick to it as long as you live. Never write what is not true. But you must think of something that is true. Come, tell me something.

Maria's Lesson

B. I don't know.

R. Let's see—The kitten has been playing with its tail this quarter of an hour.

B. No, don't write that.

R. Why should not I write that?

B. 'Cause that's silly; Tommy don't want to know anything about the kitten and its tail.

R. Good again! Why, my dear, I see you know a great deal about letter-writing. It is not enough that a thing is true; it must be worth writing about. Do tell me something to say.

B. I don't know.

R. Shall I write this—"You'll be glad to hear that Sammy is quite recovered from the small-pox and come downstairs"?

B. Oh yes! do write that.

R. And why should I write that?

B. 'Cause Tommy loves Sammy dearly, and will be so glad to hear he's got well again.

R. Why, Betsy, my dear, you know how to write a letter very well, if you will give yourself a little trouble. Now, what next?

And this is Elizabeth Turner's poem :—

" Maria intended a letter to write,
But could not begin (as she thought) to indite;
So went to her mother with pencil and slate,
Containing 'Dear Sister,' and also a date.

Talking on Paper

'With nothing to say, my dear girl, do not think
Of wasting your time over paper and ink;
But certainly this is an excellent way,
To try with your slate to find something to say.

'I will give you a rule,' said her mother, 'my dear ;
Just think for a moment your sister is here,
And what would you tell her? consider, and then,
Though silent your tongue, you can speak with your pen.'

Speak with the pen!—that is what the best letter-writers do, whether they are literary artists, such as Lamb and Horace Walpole, Cowper and Keats, Edward FitzGerald and Shirley Brooks, or the unknown pen-gossips whose letters are flying hither and thither at this very moment, linking household to household and heart to heart. My own theory is that as good letters have been and are being written by obscure people as any that find their way into volumes. In many respects better, since there can be no taint of self-consciousness in their composition, no hint of posing, no thought of posterity, no attempt to do more than interest or amuse.

Talking on paper: that is letter-writing; and it is because plain talk is very often better than brilliant talk that education is of little service to correspondents, and the best writers of books are by no means

Sir Guy's Greenhouse

the best writers of letters. Many persons who spell phonetically on rules not of Pitman's but of Nature's framing, are better correspondents than the Universities can produce. In some of the best letters I have seen, "has" was always spelt "as," and there were many small capital i's ; but how interesting and communicative and shrewd they were ! It is indeed time that a stand was made against the pedantic and prosaic tyranny of orthography. Take, for example, the following scrap of a letter from a gardener to his employer—were the gardener a man of education how much less picturesque would his message be ! The greenhouse would then have possessed no sex and no individuality. As it is, the greenhouse is a delightful monster : "Sir Guy Edwardson Bart Im varry sorry to tell you that I cant do enaything with the green [greenhouse] I think he will kill every plant I have sometimes he will get varry hot and another time I cant get eney heat in him and we cant stape him from smoking so I dount know what I can do with him." Again, incorrectness of spelling does not impair the force of the following exhaustive epistle, which was recently addressed to an Australian politician by a supporter, who, like the poor man in "Ecclesiastes" that helped the beleaguered king, was

Downright Pens

subsequently not remembered. He wrote, as reported by the *Sydney Bulletin* :—

"DEER SUR,—You're a dam fraud, and you know it. I don't care a rap for the billet or the muny either, but you could hev got it for me if you wasn't as mean as muk. Two pound a week ain't eny moar to me than 40 shillin's is to you, but I objekt to bein' maid an infurnil fool of. Soon after you was elected by my hard workin', a feller here wanted to bet me that You wouldn't be in the House moren a week before you maid a ass of yourself. I bet him a Cow on that as i thort you was worth it then. After i got Your Note sayin' you deklined to ackt in the matter i driv the Cow over to the Feller's place an' tole him he had won her.

"That's orl i got by howlin' meself Hoarse for you on pole day, an' months befoar. You not only hurt a man's Pride, but you injur him in Bizness. I believe you think you'll get in agen. I don't. An' what I don't think is of moar Konsequence then you imajin. I beleave you take a pleshir in cuttin' your best friends, but wate till the clouds roll by an' they'll rut you—just behind the Ear, where the butcher cut the pig. Yure no man. An' I doant think yure much of a demerocrat either. Go to hel. I lowers meself ritin to a skunk, even tho' I med him a member of parlerment."

A Lovers' Quarrel

If this writer does not possess what Matthew Arnold called "a serviceable prose style," it would be puzzling to say who does.

In Mrs. Trevelyan's *Glimpses of Welsh Life and Character* are two letters which display a similar directness. They tell of a lover's quarrel. The lady wrote first :—

"I do send you these few lines to say that this do leave me in good health ; but I do not mean to walk out with you any more, because you did say as how I was as sweet as flummery, and after that you did go and tell Elizabeth how that she was sweeter than huney. Now, if so be I am only flummery you can put on your best cloathes and take to huney as soon as you like. I do mean to walk out with another chap next Sunday. He's huney and treakle put together. So no more from your late friend and future enemy,

M. R."

The gentleman replied :—

"This is to warn you that if you do walk out with Huney and Treakle next Sunday I will break your legs. So no more whatever from your determined well-wisher,

C. P."

The magazine of the General Post Office once published the facsimile of a postcard which, owing

The Trotters

to the absence of any address, was never delivered. It is a miracle of forcible statement. The communication ran :—

"I have received the hamper but no trotters the tripe is no good without the trotters you have had the money and I want the stuff and I want the trotters my money is as good as your stuff." The non-delivery of this message is one of life's little ironies.

In spite of entertaining arrays of primitive phonetics, a prejudice in favour of correct spelling is, one fears, certain to linger : printers' readers, parents, and schoolmasters play too important a part in the control of the world. As an instance of how deep-rooted this prejudice is, I might mention that in a work on rowing, Mr. Rudy Lehmann, himself an athlete and humorist who ought to know better, urges correct spelling even upon oarsmen—oarsmen ! They are called upon to share in the author's contempt for the second note (and possibly the first) in the following concise correspondence between a coach and one of his crew. The coach wrote :—

"DEAR —,—It has been reported to me that you broke training last night you were seen smoking not

The Two Wiffs

only a few wiffs but a whole pipe I have therefore decided to turn you out of the boat.

"Yours etc. . . ."

The reply ran thus :—

"DEAR —,—I am in reciet of your letter it is true that I smoked two whiffs (not 'wiffs' as you say) out of another man's pipe but that's all however I don't want to row in your beastly boat.

"Yours etc. . . ."

If men who can manage an outrigger are not to be permitted to spell as they like, it is time we ceased to call England a free country.¹

In an interesting article in the *Pall Mall Gazette* I find a writer deploring the want of individuality which literature must suffer under a single and severe standard of spelling. Why, he asks, should everyone spell alike? And he cites a redundantly spelled passage from Bacon's essays to illustrate the charm which we are losing by our pedantry. But it is very often more the fault of the printer than

¹ The curious circumstance to be noted among weak spellers is their inconsistency. The same word is often spelled both correctly and incorrectly in the space of a few lines. The following note was once pinned by a neighbour to my door :—

"No telegram has not come, the missus as not arrived."

Pronunciation

the author. Many authors cannot spell correctly ; all printers, or printers' readers, seem to be able to.

Yet although spelling is now fixed, pronunciation is not, and what we lose of individuality in writing we can gain in talk. I sometimes wish that pronunciation were fixed, for it is very embarrassing to be conversing with someone who has a totally different way from one's own of applying stress ; and this difficulty has grown since London became a suburb of New York. Americans have such very different ideas of stress. They say "ink-quirry," for example, when we say "inquiry."

Sometimes very funny results follow odd pronunciation. Thus a recently bereaved widow living in an English village once informed her visitor (at least so he imagined) that her sorrow was the less by reason of the possession of a son in the Azores. Not exactly comprehending wherein the alleviation existed, the visitor murmured some conventional phrase, but he was bewildered when his companion went on to say that she expected her son to walk over that evening for an hour or so, as he was in the habit of doing. Here was a dilemma : supposing him to have heard aright, his obvious course was to felicitate the mother on the possession of so gifted a son ; but he could

Poor Letter "H"

not have heard aright, and yet she had distinctly repeated the word more than once—the Azores. He therefore said nothing and waited. In a moment the solution came. "You see, sir," the widow added, "his regiment is stationed at Brighton." Then it was plain as day. The culprit was the poor letter "H" again, who had absconded, leaving behind him some fantastic vowel-combination to cover his retreat. What the widow meant was not the Azores, but the Hussars. Yet, beyond doubt, she said Azores, because she was one of those persons who take advantage, unconsciously, of every opportunity for mispronunciation.

Reading aloud is the unavoidable test of correct pronunciation. In conversation, as in the case with the man who always called a vase a pot, one may temporise, affect forgetfulness, resort to periphrases; but in reading aloud there is no time. The word assails one from ambush, as it were. The precious-stone verses in the twenty-first chapter of Revelations can count their victims by hundreds.

Convention having oddly enough arranged that everyone to whom we write, whether to a parent or an undertaker, shall be called "dear," the beginning of letters, except with hyper-conscientious corre-

Subscription Difficulties

spondents, is easy ; and the hyper-conscientiousness which boggles at the inaccurate employment of "dear" does not often persist after the teens. The true difficulty in most letters comes at the end, so wide is the choice of adverbs with which the writer may express his feelings towards the correspondent. On this subject Lewis Carroll says : "If doubtful whether to end with 'yours faithfully' or 'yours truly' or 'yours most truly' . . . refer to your correspondent's last letter, and make your winding-up *at least as friendly as his* : in fact, even if a shade *more* friendly it will do no harm." This is astute ; but it will not help in the case of the letter-writer who is answering nothing. Southey, it may be noted, always dropped in "God bless you."

The third-person note is one escape from the adverbial dilemma ; but only a genius can manipulate it. There is certain to be ambiguity among the pronouns. If our social system were not so ridiculously complex, the form would never have been introduced. In more cases than not the attempt is frankly abandoned after a few lines, as in the following reply from a farmer's wife concerning lodgings :—

"Mrs. Tullett wishes to tell Mrs. Smith that her

Mother and Son

rooms are now let, and I don't know how long it will be before they are vacant."

Experience teaches that it is best to adhere to the first person singular, even at the cost of appearing too familiar. By the way, among first-person-singular correspondence there is nothing to excel the conciseness, force, and directness of the following notes, which once passed between Mrs. Foote, the mother of the comedian, and Foote himself. Mrs. Foote wrote:—

"DEAR SAM,—I am in prison for debt ; come and assist your loving mother,
E. FOOTE."

Sam replied:—

"DEAR MOTHER,—So am I ; which prevents his duty being paid to his loving mother by her affectionate son,
SAM FOOTE."

Millionaires correspond, one presumes, entirely by telegram. An objection to such a practice, apart from the detail of expense, is that in time one must come to talk like Alfred Jingle.

The antithesis of the telegram is the postcard, which has as little connection with true epistolary art.

Lewis Carroll Again

The fact that ingenious persons can crowd many hundreds of words upon it is nothing in its favour. To crowd words is indeed a fault in correspondence ; to underline (a womanly accomplishment) is undesirable ; and to cross is wicked. "Remember," says Lewis Carroll, "the old proverb, 'Cross writing makes cross reading'"—adding slyly, "'The old proverb?' you say inquiringly. 'How old?' Well, not so *very* ancient, I must confess. In fact, I'm afraid I invented it while writing this paragraph." Another bad habit is eccentric pagination, especially when indicative numbers by which it may be followed are omitted. Yet considering what a blessed thing the letter can be—and by letters I mean friendly, intimate pen-chat—any method, however odd, is permissible. Communicativeness is the grand test.

Innkeepers and Little Carts

I HAVE just had a present worth the name. Most presents are useless—consisting either of something that one does not want, or something that one does want but would not have bought for oneself quite in that form. But my present is perfect—a new atlas of England and Wales on the half-inch survey. I do not say that the inch survey would not have been better; but one carries that in one's pocket sheet by sheet: in the home the half-inch is sufficient. It is surely enough to have all England and Wales, and a little unavoidable piece of Scotland north of the Border, spread out for one in delectable half-inches in the pages of a single book. I shall not grumble. I can, by a superb effort of muscle, place it on the table and roam wherever I like, from Land's End to the Tweed. I can know just how high the land is, for the

Maps and Inns

altitudes are indicated by varying shades of brown (Snowdon is black); I can swim or ford rivers; I can penetrate woods; I can avoid towns; I can trespass and not be persecuted. Having completed a long walk (as I have just done in Wiltshire), I can sit down in an armchair, balance this prodigious tome on my knees, and perform the week's journey all over again in a few minutes; or if an interested friend should come in, I can take him with me step by step and tell him all about the Icknield Way and the inns.

The inns. That opens up a new subject, and reminds me of the great weakness of ordinary walking-maps, whether one inch or half-inch. They do not discriminate between inns. They say "Inn." They do not say "Good inn," "Indifferent inn," "Bad inn," "New proprietor," "Cold joints kept," "Old ale here," "Good bacon," and so forth. How could they, indeed, when they do so much? But it ought to be done. Someone ought to prepare maps on this principle, particularly now, when, with the rise of the automobile, the inn is coming into use again. Loth as one is to suggest that we have not enough books, I am sure there is a call for a road book which shall really be an independent guide to inns. Kelly's

Two Good Bonifaces

county directories are good, and there are hotel guides, too, but in these the landlords are their own appraisers. My book should be impartial and should confine itself to the essential things—trustworthy airing, spontaneous lighting of fires, coals that emit heat, beef, beer. It should also (this is very important) say how long each landlord has been in the house.

A saturnine friend once remarked to me, as we passed the familiar notice, that the best thing to be said of any English inn was that it was "under entirely new management." I looked upon the comment then as a piece of his destructive humour; but now I know that it was a profound truth. During the past month I have come, tired in the evening, to many inns, but the only two which I recall with unfeigned pleasure were in the hands of men who had taken them over since midsummer. One was at Lambourn, the other at Devizes. These alone played the host as one likes to think of that rôle. I do not mean that they spent their time on the doorstep scanning the road for travellers, and on sight of them setting in motion the machinery of theatrical welcome; but they were hearty and suggestive, and although it was only October—and the ordinary inn lights its fires by a

Wet but Welcome

calendar which authorises nothing before November, and is grudging then—they struck matches with cordial zest, and, what is not less to their credit, made no play with wine lists, swept away the pink glasses without a suspicion of a frown, and were as ready to discuss the merits of their old ale as though every pint carried ten shillings profit. It was not as if we had about us any symbol of wealth or influence—quite the reverse; while to one of these hostelries (the one at Lambourn) we came on a Sunday afternoon (when landlords like to rest among the wax flowers and portraits of Lord Kitchener) wet to the skin. But our welcome was one of the kindest things I remember in all my life, in spite of a rivulet from each of us that rushed about the parlour floor and put the tap-room in spate. I daresay that both these landlords will become mechanical in time; but we caught them fresh and loved them. May they soon pass on to develop inns elsewhere, and may they be continually passing on, leaving equally zealous successors behind them!

How Dickens gloried in the innkeeper type—revelled in it! He gave us landlords moulded of the finest clay, of whom old John of the Maypole in *Barnaby Rudge* was not the least; but for racy flavour the innkeeper in *Silas Marner* is equal to any of them.

Great Innkeepers

Thackeray has good innkeepers too, but it is, of course, Dickens who in the aggregate extracts from them their best value. Why, think only of his scenes that are laid at an inn. It was at an inn that Mr. Pickwick met Sam, at an inn that Nicholas met Squeers, at an inn that Mr. Pickwick strayed into the wrong bedroom, at an inn that David Copperfield relinquished his glass of porter to the waiter, at an inn that Mr. Weller ducked Mr. Stiggins. The list is unending. The difference between innkeepers in English fiction and innkeepers in European fiction is that the latter are never honest. In Dumas, in Le Sage, in Cervantes, what rogues they are. Think of the villainies practised upon Don Quixote and upon Gil Blas by innkeepers ! Literature also numbers good hostesses, notably (of course) Mistress Quickly, of the Boar's Head in Eastcheap, and Mrs. Anthony Weller of the Marquess of Granby at Dorking. As for Mistress Quickly, she is, of course, immortal. At first one is attracted by the abundance of her nature, her rich, full-blooded robustness, her magnificent fidelity to fact and opposition to mealy metaphor and innuendo. Afterwards, when she tells of the death of Sir John, our admiration turns to love.

There are certain men who naturally become inn-

Inn Pictures

keepers. Butlers end their lives behind their own bars, professional cricketers either sell cricketing implements or take a house. Jockeys and bookmakers come to innkeeping, too, but their houses are less interesting. Where the landlord is an old cricketer, you will find on the walls lithographs of Alfred Mynn and Felix, faded photographs of early Australian teams, "W. G.," and Jupp, All England in the 'sixties, and so on. Where the inn is on a high road and now in the tenancy of an ex-driver, you will find coloured sporting prints after Sartorius, and the Alkens, and J. F. Herring, and perhaps the picture commemorating poor Jim Selby's great and fatal drive from London to Brighton and back in a little under eight hours. Innkeepers' taste in books is less sound. In fact most inn libraries are composed of what visitors leave behind, with an old work on farriery added.

The right innkeeper is never in a hurry, never so busy as to treat a customer abruptly, never so idle as to thrust himself upon a customer for pastime. Nor—although nothing is so despicable in an innkeeper as slavish trimming—must he too vigorously assert himself. To independence he must unite flexibility, knowledge of the world to self-respect. Moreover, he should be a man of portly presence and genial bear-

Old Ale

ing, capable of looking attractive if not dignified in shirt sleeves, for that is the uniform of the brotherhood. He should be able to recall from personal experience several Derbys, and know of a man who has terrier puppies for sale. He should, for the traveller's benefit, be intimate with the country within a ten-mile radius (but, as a melancholy fact, he seldom is), and an authority on the private lives of the neighbouring squires. Above all, he should be a judge of good liquor, and keep nothing but the best. And here, alas! he woefully fails. The innkeeper who takes a genuine pride, born of knowledge, in the liquor he sells is distressingly rare. Either by reason of the tied-house system, or heavy rent, or carelessness, or ignorance, the average innkeeper thinks not at all of the quality of his beer. That he should treat wine somewhat perfunctorily is perhaps natural, but there is no excuse for bad beer. How seldom can one obtain old ale—

“Ale that the absent battle fights
And frames the march of Swedish drum,
Disputes the Prince's laws and rights,
And what is past and what's to come
Tells mortal wights.”

And yet old ale of notable integrity should be in every

Importance of Hunger

inn cellar, and the innkeeper should be able to tell the date on which the barrel was laid down.

I wonder how many persons who ride about England in motor-cars recognise that a grave social responsibility is resting upon them. Their immediate duty to their fellow-men is simply to be frequently hungry, and to insist upon being properly fed. By so doing they have it in their power to regenerate the roadside inns of this country, and thus to be of incalculable public service. For the roadside inns to-day are, most of them, in as bad a state as they can well be—from the point of view of everyone whose requirements extend beyond beer. Eating in them seems to have gone clean out. It is the commonest experience of anyone on a walking expedition to be met with the information that there is nothing to eat in the house, or only bread and cheese; while sometimes one has to face the point-blank refusal to prepare any food at all.

If the poet Shenstone, who wrote the verses which too many indifferent landlords use as an advertisement, were to revisit this life and take a walking expedition in the country easily accessible from London, I fear that no more lines celebrating the warm welcome of the inn would emerge from his pen. Most of the welcomes that now retain any heat are

“Bonifiers”

reserved for the consumers of liquids. People who require more solid sustenance are a nuisance.

This is not the case all over England. In Yorkshire there is still a prejudice in favour of eating ; and the finest cold meal I ever saw spread for the casual sojourner was at Helston, in Cornwall ; but in the home counties the between-town roadside inns have too much come to be merely houses where people drink—a base misuse of a noble institution. If I found myself on the Bench at a Brewster Sessions, I would advocate granting no licence on a high road between towns unless the landlord covenanted to keep a joint of beef always in cut.

It is probable—I have no knowledge of the law in this matter—that a *bonâ-fide* traveller has as much right to demand food as drink ; but there are few of us who have enough character to see such a demand carried out by an intractable and unpleasant landlord, or enough presence to convince that landlord that the case is earnest. A presence is immensely important, and that is where I feel that the motor-car is going to be so helpful. Not that the automobilist is necessarily a giant, but his environment is impressive. He is attended by circumstances of importance and excitement.

Motocrats

The persons who dash over the roads in motor-cars are commanding and terrible. They seem almost like visitors from another planet : implacable Martians. They are exquisitely calculated to strike fear into the hearts of even independent landlords, and to appal and instruct the cravens placed by brewers in tied houses. Also they are, as I have said, rich, and therefore are worth pleasing by innkeepers. But most of all they are hungry, and having no motive power to supply themselves as they sit among their cushions after a meal, they are prepared to eat heartily. It follows, then, that they have the regeneration of our inns in the hollow of their hands. By eating steadily all along the road they will come to set a new fashion. Landlords will once again take to keeping something in the house besides liquids ; and humble travellers will once again venture to expect food.

The motor-car does not otherwise interest me. I have no wish to go fast ; I want to go very slow indeed, I want to use my legs. Every man must champion some lost cause or other if he would keep sweet ; and legs are mine. Yet to gird at the motor-car, however it may relieve the feelings, is becoming very old game : "mechanical," as Beau Tibbs would say—and one hates that. So I will only say that I

Little Carts

have lately been very happy in the country of the little carts.

The country of the little carts has wide borders, but you do not enter it very near London. You must pay about six shillings for your third-class ticket before you can really reach it. But then you will be in it at once, without further prelude—there will be little carts at the station, and little carts in the town, and some will have old rosy-cheeked men driving them, and some will have young farmers, and sometimes there will be a pretty girl by the driver, and sometimes a grandmother with a basket. But the carts will be all alike in their size, and in their pace, and in an air of quiet content. And they will not seem to be wishing they were bigger carts—wagonettes, phaetons, brakes, *chars-à-bancs*; thus differing as completely as is possible from motor-cars, which, I understand, are always wanting to be larger and stronger than they are. It is good now and then to see a 1-cob power vehicle being glad it is 1-cob power. For such a corrective you must seek the country of the little carts.

I saw the little carts everywhere; at all times I heard them coming or going. I met them and was passed by them; now and then I overtook them

Gloucestershire

(outside hostelryes, one of which bore the odd and melancholy name of The Trouble House). Once I sat beside the road for a few minutes on a bridge over a stream, and two little carts passed me instantly. They sprang from nowhere, came into being for my delectation, and vanished into nothingness again. And all had two wheels and a sturdy cob, and they came rattling merrily along the road. Had I asked them, they would have given me a lift, I am sure ; but I was walking. That was in Gloucestershire, where the walls are made of stone (out of which once popped a weasel, and ran along a little way and then disappeared, and then again appeared and disappeared, as if it were hemming a handkerchief—in and out, out and in) : in quiet gabled Gloucestershire, where the humblest barn is more beautifully ecclesiastic than the most pretentious of our latter-day churches, and cattle have sheds that surpass many cloisters ; where wallflowers, in their true colours, grow like weeds—brown and yellow, yellow and brown, with never a spurious purple among them ; and where in the spring the meadows are full of cowslips. But most of all in Gloucestershire I noticed the little carts.

I saw them all the time, as I say, except on Sunday

Cirencester

—all about Malmesbury (which, however, is in Wiltshire), and all about Tetbury, with its lofty spire, and Stroud beneath Minchinhampton's heights. But when I reached Cirencester on a Monday—which is market-day—then I discovered that previously I had known nothing about little carts at all ; for I had seen them hitherto in ones and threes, and here they were in battalions. Cirencester (which, praise be to God, is not, I found, pronounced, as I had always been told by the profane, Cissister, but Cir-en-ces-ter in full—slowly, with loyal stress on every one of its noble syllables), Cirencester that Monday, although populous with flustered bullocks and men in leggings, was really a city of little carts. The men in leggings and the flustered bullocks owned only the centre of the town ; the little carts the rest. Every inn-yard was a mass meeting of little carts ; little carts resting idly on their shafts filled the outlying streets. I never before saw so many little carts. So many little carts never before saw me.

I intended to say nothing of motor-cars, except between the lines, but I find I must. For yesterday, which was a Sunday of heat and nightingales, as I was climbing a hill road in Kent, meditating on life and looking now and then at the Weald under the

Dust the Destroyer

slanting sun, I was aware suddenly of a monstrous noise behind me, and, turning hastily, beheld a giant motor-car breasting the slope as unconcernedly as if that were a mill race. It passed me in a rush and whirl, and for more than a minute, such was its eddy of dust, the hill, the Weald, indeed the whole world, including all my gentle thoughts, were blotted out as though they had never been. I groped and strangled and knew something of what the Arab feels when the simoon fills his eyes and throat ; and by the time my senses were clear again the owner of the car was, I suppose, comfortably in his bath in Park Lane. Well, all this is unimportant, trivial, daily ; but it served to send my mind back to the country of the little carts with poignant longing. For, being well outside what I may call the stockbrokers' zone, in which it is my lot normally to dwell, it has few motor-cars, and those few seem to lack the arrogance which the A and LC cars for the most part possess—this car yesterday, for example. Is it possible, I asked myself, to go through a peaceful country village, and up a beautiful hill beside a great view, amid singing birds, on a Sunday afternoon, making a cloud of disfiguring dust that not only is very hard on wayfarers but very hard on hedges and hedge flowers too—is it possible

My Boy's Destiny

to do this willingly and have a pure mind, a kindly heart? I have grave doubts.

I suppose that to the owner of a powerful motor-car, accustomed to take hills at a leap, so to speak, and to pass everything that appears on the road before him, I suppose that to such a man a little cart is a more impossible thought than to Mr. Meredith, say, a daily hour with a first reader, or to Sir Martin Conway a stroll over Primrose Hill, or to Mr. Jessop a bat-and-trap contest at a Sunday-school treat. To such as he a little cart must be the last word in retrogression, inoperativeness. I hope so; for if I were autocrat, and it seemed well to punish this man, I should sentence him to a little cart. "Drive a little cart," I should say, "for six months, and get humility into you again."

To return to the atlas, if I had a son I think I would make him a cartographer. It may not be the lordliest life, but it is a very good one, for it would bring him continually into touch with the soil; it would teach him the green earth. He would be forced to know England, and what destiny could be more delightful? I used to want to spend much time in France, if not farther afield; but this atlas, for the present at any rate, has changed all that. My

Ambition

one ambition now, as I turn its pages, is to know more of England, to know all of England. Those brown heights I must scale; those green levels I must wander through; I must try all those "inns."

Cricket and the Backward Look ♪ ♪

I HAVE lately been reading again several very delightful books on cricket—Nyren's and Mr. Pycroft's, Caffyn's *Seventy-one Not Out*, the Bishop of Tasmania's *History of Kennington*, Mr. Pullin's *Talks with old English Cricketers*, and Albert Knight's new psychological study of the game, so patient and sincere and admirable in spirit; and though I have been very happy loitering among their pages, I have been unhappy too. Regrets will come stealing in—regrets for a day when matches were fewer, and innings were shorter and smaller and yet more glorious, and cricketers were simpler, and pitches were less perfect, and Lord's was not like a race meeting, and a hundred was called a hundred and not a century, and there was no county championship, and no evening paper *réclame*, and W. G. played for

Single Wicket

Gloucestershire, and the interval for tea (tea!) was unknown. Think of Alfred Mynn taking an interval for tea, and think of Fuller Pilch's surprise if he should alight upon a paper which (as a paper did last week) applied the headline "A Bad Start" to the score of an innings which reached 117 for two wickets. There was a time when 117 was a decent score for a whole side. It is not difficult sometimes to wish for that time once more.

I wonder if we are ever to see single-wicket matches again. They seem to have gone for ever, with the tall hat, and the grey flannel shirt, and the leg hit; and yet there must in the old days have been as much fun and excitement at a two-hours' single-wicket match as ever is extracted now from a three-day county contest.

For it is not as though the spectacle of eleven men striving to outwit and conquer eleven others were eleven times better than the spectacle of the same struggle between one and one. Quite the reverse. And considering the modern tendency to get at the essence of the thing, to take pleasures rapidly, it is rather odd that the shorter form of the game should have gone so completely out in favour of the longer. But so it is.

The Modern Stress

There are, of course, reasons enough for the decay of single-wicket. It is the highly-specialised character of first-class cricket to-day that has crowded out these old genial contests between hero and hero, any balance of time left over by an early finish of a three-day match that might have been well spent in this way having now to go to the recuperation of the cricketers against their next match. Committees who have to pay their way would not like to see such wanton expenditure of strength as would be involved by a single-wicket match, or, indeed, by any of the old methods of filling up time in the interests of sport and the spectator, such as throwing the cricket ball or a hundred yards race. These are the penalties of the severity of the modern conditions of the first-class game, under which the cricketer is ceasing to be anything but a cricketing machine.

Single-wicket is, of course, a serious matter. It is a fiercer trial of all-round capacity than the ordinary game. The bowler has to bowl steadily without the rest offered by overs, and he must bat almost immediately after. Hence, considering how continuous is the strain on a county cricketer to-day, there is very good reason why it should not be played by these men in the heart of the season. But September

A Word to the M.C.C.

should see many matches. The holders of the two highest averages at the end of the first-class fixtures, for example, might by an unwritten law always have to meet. This would be a capital institution. The two bowlers heading the analyses might also play—probably a match of amazing brevity. But, as a matter of fact, scores in most of the historic single-wicket matches are surprisingly low, and if the old average were maintained there would be time in one day to polish off not only the two contests I have named, but perhaps one or two challenges too.

The M.C.C. ought to think seriously of a single-wicket carnival at the end of each season. It is what cricket wants, and will want still more if the present commercial and over-strenuous conditions proceed by logical progression: a touch of irresponsibility, a breath of the sporting spirit. A few merry individual challenges sandwiched in between the formal rigours and classic austerities of the inter-county fixtures would save the first-class game. The *Muse of Cricket* just now, I believe, has a kinder feeling for the Saturday afternooners on the village greens.

Mr. Pycroft, who wrote *The Cricket Field*, sat at the feet of old Beldham, the famous Silver Billy, of whom Nyren wrote with such fervour, and heard many

Silver Billy

stories of the great single-wicket days. The name of William Beldham is in itself a symbol for cricket romance—this beautiful fair-haired athlete—a model for Pheidias, Nyren calls him—who, after a young manhood of great deeds, at the age of fifty-four crashed all over the ground the terrible bowling of Browne of Brighton, the fastest bowler of his time, and perhaps as fast as anyone since. On the day before this match, Browne dropped into the Green Man, where Beldham and Fennex were taking a glass, and mentioned to Beldham, "with as much sincerity as good humour"—I quote from Fennex's narration to Mr. Mitford—"that he should soon send his stumps a-flying. 'Hold there,' said Beldham, fingering his bat; 'you will be good enough to allow me this bit of wood, won't you?' 'Certainly,' said Browne. 'Quite satisfied,' answered Beldham;" and on the morrow he made 72 and Browne had no chance.

Another of the more famous single-wicket matches was that at Lord's in 1810, in which Mr. Osbaldeston and William Lambert backed themselves to beat Lord Frederick Beauclerk (perhaps the greatest name in the history of cricket) and Mr. Howard. Mr. Osbaldeston was too ill to play, and as Lord Frederick

William Lambert

refused to postpone the match the whole burden fell upon Lambert. Lambert was equal to the task. He made 56 and 24, and put out the others for 24 and 42. Beldham, who was there, told Mr. Pycroft that Mr. Osbaldeston's mother sat by in her carriage, and when the game was won called Lambert to her. After a brief interval he bore away a paper parcel, but whether it contained a gold watch or bank-notes no one ever knew. Lambert seems to have lived for cricket. One of his cousins—an old lady of eighty and a neighbour of mine—told me that he thought nothing of walking twenty-five miles to London to get a little good practice. He took the game very seriously right to the end. One night, she told me, he astonished her household—she then lived at Westerham—by walking in unexpectedly at a late hour with a thunder-cloud on his broad brow. He had been playing in a match at Tonbridge, and had been "cheated out." That was his story. To offer supper or a bed was useless. With the refrain "cheated out" on his lips he strode forth again on his way to Nutfield. Had Lambert been a boy this incident would be nothing; but he was over sixty! "And," added his cousin, "as active as a cat."

I heard the other day, between the innings of a

A Story

village match, the best single wicket story of recent times that has come my way. Two octogenarians, A. and B., both old Blues, were so carried away by enthusiasm at the last University match that they arranged a single wicket contest. On the day appointed they met, among a number of sympathetic friends. B. won the toss, and went in and had made 12 before he was bowled; but when the time came for A. to take the bat he was unable to do so. *Anno Domini* asserted itself: his weariness and weakness were too serious; he could only lie on a sofa and cry for his lost strength. It was therefore decided that B. should go out to bowl the absent man's wicket down. Off he went, with the crowd, while A. groaned indoors in an agony of disappointment and feebleness. Suddenly, however, his friends came running back, all excitement and satisfaction. "Bravo! well played, old man!" they cried. "You've won the match—he's bowled 13 wides!"

Seriously, the revival of single-wicket matches ought to be considered, or something done to rejuvenate the first-class game. The mischief is the necessity for each county to be a going concern. Money has done the evil. When money comes in at the door joyousness flies out of the window, and

George IV.

first-class cricket has become a little care-worn. Some people have said that literature requires patrons but cricket needs them far more. Cricket should be the hobby of the House of Lords, the hereditary foes to gate money. If peers had grounds and elevens there would be fun in the first-class field once more, and single-wicket matches in plenty.

A propos of patrons, I wonder how many people know that George IV. was a cricketer. Albert Knight gives him due credit, and so does an earlier and less scientific writer—Peter Parley, friend of our grandfathers' boyhood. I found Peter Parley's evidence in his *Annual* for 1840 ; and as any story to the credit of George the Fourth is desirable, however untrue, I am pleased to bring it forward. It has two merits : it shows the First Gentleman in Europe in a light more or less gentlemanly and sportsmanlike, and it shows the national game basking (as it should, but for too long has not) in the smiles of royal patronage.

This is the story, told with a naïveté possible only to one who himself had never handled bat or ball : a naïveté which is perhaps unequalled by those who write with equal ignorance of any other subject :—

"Cricket is a noble game. Why, do you know that even blood royal has stood, bat in hand, surrounded by the young

The Cobbler of Slough

buds of nobility; and I can tell you this, that the Prince of Wales, afterwards George the Fourth, was a noble cricketer, and few could bowl him out. I will tell you an anecdote of Prince George, which occurred when he was a cricketer.

"I said few could bowl him out. There was, however, a little shoemaker who lived at Slough, near Windsor; a little man, who, having a keen eye and strong arm, had acquired such extraordinary skill in bowling that few could defend a wicket against him. The Prince heard of the little man and felt desirous of trying his skill, for the Prince considered himself one of the first batsmen in the kingdom.

"A confidential friend of the Prince arranged a match between the Buckinghamshire and Berkshire cricketers, to take place on a certain day, and the Prince went disguised as a civilian.

"Well, the game began, and the Berkshire men had the first innings. The Prince being on this side, it soon fell to his Royal Highness to take the bat. 'What bit of a thing is that at the wicket?' said the cobbler.

"'Oh, he is a tailor,' said someone who stood by.

"'Then,' said the bowler, 'I'll break his bat for him.'

"He took his run and aim, and sent the ball with amazing force and velocity. The Prince blocked it as dead as a stone.

"The shoemaker held his hands over his eyes and surveyed the Prince from top to bottom. 'No tailor could do that,' said he; 'he must be a lad of wax.'

"'He is,' said the second.

"'Then I will melt him before I have done with him. Play.'

"Away went the ball again, as if it had been sent from one of the ancient war-engines.

"The Prince tipt it with the edge of his bat, without striking

The Cobbler of Slough

a blow, and it flew off to an amazing distance, in a direction by no means well guarded. Three runs was the result.

"'You have got a *strange* customer there, I am sure,' said Long Stop, who generally stands immediately behind the wicket.

"'We shall be better acquainted presently,' said he. 'I will give him a ball he is not used to.'

"After giving the Prince many other balls with great force, from which several runs were obtained by his clever management of the bat, the bowler seemed to summon up all his energy for one grand effort. He went back for a considerable distance, took an exact aim, ran with all his force to the popping course, and delivered—how—?

"As gently as the thistledown flies along the air; the ball ran along the grass like a snake, and stopped just in the middle of the wicket, knocking off the cross piece like a fly.

"A shout rose from the Buckinghamshire men, and the Prince threw down his bat, seemingly mortified; in a moment, however, he walked up to the bowler, and put a heavy purse into his hand.

"A horse was in waiting at a short distance, and the Prince immediately left the field. The next morning, however, the Slough shoemaker received a notice to attend the Castle. 'For,' said the Prince, 'if he makes shoes as well as he plays cricket, he shall be my shoemaker.' And this bowler was shoemaker to the Prince and George the Fourth after he came to the throne."

That is the story—which I have refrained from interrupting with the word *sic*: the triumph would have been too easy. One would perhaps wish that

Our Little Princes

certain things in the match had not happened : that the Prince had retained his bat, for example, and even his purse, and that the horse had not been so ready ; but the anecdote, I think, with all its faults, has great merits, if only to point the way. Our kings and princes have done so little for cricket.

But there are signs that a better time is coming. Edward the Seventh may not himself have put the scorers to much trouble or often have shed his radiance upon a great contest ; but I know from personal observation that his grandsons are keen, for I saw them at the fifth Test Match at the Oval last summer, and one day at Lord's too, watching the practice. May they (to drop into the manner of Peter Parley) grow into clever managers of the bat, capable of frequently urging the ball into directions by no means well guarded !

Not only has cricket lost many of its old simplicities, it has lost its characters too. In the late process of levelling up, or levelling down, individuality has suffered. Where is our Tom Emmett to-day ? Where is our bowler to bowl fifty-five wides in one year—and take a hundred wickets at fewer than ten runs apiece ? Around Tom's name many good stories cluster and will ever cluster. It was Tom who warned

Tom Emmett

an encroaching point: "If I were thee, mister, I'd stand a little farther back, because when I hits there I hits—hard." It was Tom who, when bowled first ball by a lob, made the classic series of answers to the commiserator in the crowd. "How was that, Tom?" "Don't Tom me." "Well, Mr. Emmett, how was that?" "Don't Mr. Emmett me." "Then what shall I call you?" "Call me a — fool." Tom Emmett, after his active cricket was over, became a professional bowler at Rugby, where he stayed several years. He then coached at Leicester, and is now dead and only a memory. But he has never been commemorated rightly. Some Rugby amateur—why not Mr. Norman Gale?—should make a collection of Emmettiana. Tom Emmett was the first to remark—on a bad voyage—that he thought they'd forgotten to put the heavy roller on: a joke borrowed by every seafaring cricketer since.

Pooley is another recent great name in the game. Like other cricketers before him, Pooley, who kept wicket for Surrey in the days of Southerton and Jupp, knew reverses, and became at last an inmate of a London workhouse. Says Mr. Pullin, "Pooley's fists are mere lumps of deformity. Every finger on the two hands has been broken; so have the two thumbs."

Southerton's Night Fear

Jem Mace once asked to be introduced to Pooley. "Pooley," he said, "I would rather stand up against any man in England for an hour than take your place behind the wickets for five minutes." Pooley's opinion of modern cricket was not too favourable: "Why, a man ought almost to keep wicket blindfold now," he remarked after a visit to Lord's. It must be remembered that grounds in the 'fifties and 'sixties were not what they are now; and there were faster bowlers than we now have—George Freeman, for example, who once laid low all three stumps with one ball; and Harvey Fellowes, who performed the same rare feat. There were probably harder hitters too, for I understand that neither Mr. Jessop nor Albert Trott has quite the power of Mr. C. I. Thornton. Mr. Jessop's hurricane drives are, however, good enough for me. It was told of Southerton, the slow bowler, that he used to lie awake at night wondering what he should do if Mr. Thornton hit the ball straight back to him. But the great cause of bumps and bruises was bad wickets. Daft once went in to bat against Platt at Lord's with a towel round his head, so fiery was the pitch. In the same over Platt had given Summers the blow on the temple to which he succumbed. But this is nothing compared with George

A Catch

Anderson's stories of how a covey of partridges went up from the pitch during a match, and how Fuller Pilch would come armed with a scythe.

Cricket's triumphs of mind over might are, to me, incomparably its greatest fascination. Nothing that happens in a match is so satisfying as the successful accomplishment of a bowler's manoeuvre. I remember that wonderful Sussex and Cambridge University meeting in 1891 (when 1402 runs were scored) in which Mr. Brann made 161 by huge hitting. There came a time in his long innings when the Light Blue chance seemed almost hopeless, so set was he and so aggressive. Change after change was tried, but in vain, until Mr. Streatfield took the ball again and remodelled the field, and Mr. R. N. Douglas was motioned carefully to a spot on the ropes at the edge of the bowling screen. It was a matter of a few seconds before his place was determined; but the position was, however, exact, for when from a half-volley in the first over Mr. Brann made a terrific drive, the ball, after sailing up and up an immense distance, swooped into Mr. Douglas's hands and was held there, the fieldsman never having moved an inch with either foot.

The sight of that flying ball nearing that motionless,

W. G.

intent fieldsman, and the thought of the issue at stake, made a moment of excitement as intense as anything ever experienced in the lists of Ashby-de-la-Zouche, while the knowledge that the *coup* had been planned imparted an additional thrill.

But there are manœuvres which put less strain on the onlooker, yet by their success kindle to content for half a day. One of Lohmann's overs *à outrance* to a timid bat—an over in which the wicket should fall at the last ball (for Lohmann was an artist with the dramatic sense)—was a sight to live for; each ball showing a little more smilingly, though not so smilingly that the wretched man forgot to be fearful, and then the fifth—the deadly fast yorker and the scattered bails. And have you seen what “W. G.” called, I believe, his bread and butter trick, meaning thereby a device for the dismissal of young players? First, a man carefully brought round from long leg to almost square, on the ropes, and then the short-pitched ball so tempting for a square leg hit, and so hard to keep down. I once saw two colts caught out this way in two overs. Of course, it is hardly less satisfying—and indeed, if your sympathies are with the side that is in, it is more so—when the batsman is wily enough to detect these snares and to defeat them.

A Saga

It is odd, with all the gusto for cricket that has been displayed among men of letters, that Nyren's book is still unapproached. Next to it comes Mr. Pycroft's, and then, I think, Mr. Pullin's *Talks with Old English Cricketers*; but these are some distance. The one is a classic; the others are books about cricket. The one has magic; the others have enthusiasm.

One would go to the sagas for the nearest parallel to the simplicity of the old Hambletonians as described by John Nyren, a simplicity closely allied to that of the good men and true who spilt blood in *The Story of Burnt Njal*, that noble record of Icelandic friendships and enmities. Indeed, Nyren's little history is as nearly a saga as we need want. Given bats in place of battle-axes, balls for arrows, and amicable rivalry at the game instead of the blood feud, and the principal differences are removed. The human nature is the same. You have the same boyish zeal, the same might, the same comradeship, and also the same brilliance in feats—such as Noah Mann's masterly riding when, dashing in at practice time on his horse, he would bend over in the saddle and pick handkerchiefs from the sward.

To walk over the site of the old Hambleton Ground,

Sacred Dorset Square

as I have done, with Nyren's book in hand, is to realise something of the glory of cricket: although there are, of course, historic scenes nearer to hand. Indeed, there is no need to wander in the search for sacred soil farther than Dorset Square, since whoever passes through that urban abode passes over the place where Lord's Ground once stood, and where once was a stone recording a drive made by Alexander, Duke of Hamilton, in which the ball travelled one hundred and thirty-two yards off the bat before it touched earth. When the ground was built over this mark vanished. And yet we preserve many unimportant things: we take the greatest care of Rufus Stone in the New Forest, while the Coronation Stone is kept in the Abbey itself.

From a Country Diary—II ◡ ◡ ◡

WRITING in a house around which the nightingales cease neither by day nor by night, I am in a position to say that the poets who have written about that exquisite friendly bird are all wrong. The nightingale utters neither eternal passion nor eternal pain. Its song is jocund rather than sorrowful, and is not always beautiful. It even has some very harsh notes. It has little variety or inspiration, going steadily through a definite series of movements, like a condensed symphony. To me its most beautiful note is the single cry that it repeats sometimes as often as fifteen times but for the most part only about six times, which is certainly wistful and plaintive in the highest degree. It must be this note of grief which has won for the bird its place in the literature of sadness, the poets being so pleased (as ever) to detect a pang of regret or woe that they have declined to hear, or have wholly

Nightingales

disregarded, the bird's neutralising and vastly more numerous notes of joy and exultation.

All these remarks, which are dictated only by a desire for truth—for personally I adore the nightingale—apply to the bird singing alone. When one stands still in a lane in May and hears three at once, as is the right way, singing in a triangle, the three voices being merged in one in magnificent riotous defiance of the stillness of the night and the menace of darkness, then all that the poets say can be believed in—except that they have understated the case for the natural joyfulness of the bird. For one is gradually and hypnotically persuaded into the feeling that all this torrent of lovely music comes but from a single ecstatic breast.

My own favourite poetical reference to the nightingale is not in Keats, not in Arnold, not in Wordsworth, although he comes very near—

“Those notes of thine—they pierce and pierce;
Tumultuous harmony and fierce!”

not in any of the classical places; but in a translation by William Cory of a poem from the Greek anthology, the lament for Heraclitus, where the poet says—

“Still are thy pleasant voices, thy nightingales, awake,
For death, he taketh all away, but them he cannot take.”

The Water Months

Here, in the phrase "pleasant voices," one finds expressed the charm and the friendliness of the bird, who, although a shy foreigner, sings never so well as when he is conscious of the proximity of man, and noisy man too.



July and August inland are not good hill months. One should get down to sea level directly they come, and there stay till September's piquant morns and fragrant evenings are here again. In our case this migration to the lowlands is peculiarly necessary, for we have no water. Were it not for a distant spring, we should go dry as a caravan in the desert. During this hot spell I have been thinking of the sea with an intensity of feeling to which even Tantalus was a stranger. There is a little bay in Cornwall. . . . And the river, too. There is a certain Thames backwater. . . . And meanwhile the nasturtiums blaze on. Will nothing put them out?

All that we can do in the way of satisfying the water craving is to permit whatever showers that come to rain upon us. A thunderstorm makes the finest shower bath, especially at night. No wise hill-dweller ever wastes a thunderstorm, even if he has

Country Scents

to get up in the middle of the night and fumble his way to the grass, there to be rained upon.

One of the advantages which we on the sandy hill have over riparian and seaside folk in hot weather is our wealth of scents. The sun in the brake-fern ! The sun in the pine trees ! The sun in the heather ! The sun in the honeysuckle ! All these hot weeks I have been banqueting on these scents. There is near us a walk of only half a mile, where the aromas come in the order I have set down. Another joy of this particular walk is that you come suddenly now and then upon little districts of heat, caused probably by some neighbouring shrub that has greater power than the others to retain and radiate it. These hot-air districts resemble the warm springs that as children we used to chance upon when paddling, and stand in for a while. There is a certain aromatic valley in Yorkshire, behind Hambledon, where you walk through a chain of such invisible heat chambers.

But a hill compensation in the extreme heat is the satisfaction of the evenings. Down below, by the sea or river, you cannot detach yourself from the earth in the same way : you are in it and of it ; but up above, you can, as it were, stand aside and hear the mundane movement going on. Especially you can hear

The Bough-Breakers

the hot earth sighing satisfaction in the prospect of a cooler night.



I wish that Bank Holiday refugees from towns would lose the habit of breaking down branches. And yet we who live in the country have not perhaps the right to wish anything of the kind, remembering how much these boughs of the green trees must mean on the morrow, and the day after that, and the day after that, in the homes to which they are carried in triumph. On Bank Holidays Birnam Wood goes to Dunsinane with a vengeance. People who live in the country have, indeed, to put a guard continually upon themselves if they are to keep out the sin of selfishness. We get into a habit of resentment which the Recording Angel probably ranks very high among the human offences. We get into the way of considering public footpaths our own property, and resenting other wayfarers; we get into the way of appropriating certain walks, and resenting their discovery by others; we get into the way of appropriating skylines, and resenting new houses thereon. Indeed, nothing enrages us so much (however new and hideous our own home may be) as the erection of a house near

September Disasters

by. To build a house within our own circle of country is an unpardonable sin. Punishment for resentment must always follow as a matter of course. What will ours be? Well, only yesterday, as we were speaking of coal, a man told me that the weald of Kent (our weald) may possibly be transformed very shortly into another Black Country. That, perhaps, will be our punishment.



A rat has taken possession of the spring, and nothing can induce him to enter a trap and close a career that is becoming something more serious than a nuisance. In obedience to some occult law, every September we have a water difficulty. Last year the hop-pickers were found washing their heads in it; the year before there was another visitation of rats; the year before that the hop-pickers filled their kettles by dipping them bodily in—good, honest, black kettles! Farther back than that I cannot remember, but I know that September is the luckless month.

We share our spring with three other cottages, the right to draw water from the Buddles (as the spring is locally called) being mentioned in the title-deeds of this place as far back as 1748—possibly earlier

The Buddles

still, did not the infirmity of legal handwriting prevent one from investigating. In the interests of the neighbours and ourselves, I gave last Sunday afternoon to the labour of emptying the spring and cleaning out the mud, the theory of the oldest inhabitant being that it was something very appetising in this mud which attracted the rat.

Emptying a spring belongs to the same class of task as those attempted by Sisyphus and Penelope. However, I managed to dig out the mud from the stone bottom, and, save for a very thin veneer of dirt, I left the spring clean. That evening the water was like crystal—its normal state; but alas! the next morning the mud clouds had returned, and they are there at this moment. Whether or not the rat is the cause we shall not know until he either falls to the gun I have borrowed, or is caught in one of the many traps with which the sides of the spring now “bristle,” as the military experts say. But, whatever the cause, the doom of the Buddles has gone forth so far as we are concerned. A well-sinker is coming tomorrow.

To come back from Switzerland, that paradise of water, as I have just done, to this arid, sandy hillside, with nothing but a fouled spring and two distant and

Dutch Water

not too vivacious wells, is to understand contrast Good, sluggish English streams when they die go to Switzerland. It is the water's heaven. It is worth while being a stream in Switzerland, for you not only have a splendid run on your own account, tumbling and leaping and splashing and foaming and roaring, but ultimately you become a river worthy the name, the Rhine or the Rhone, for example. The Rhone is popularly supposed to have its source from the Rhone glacier, but I have seen at least two eager runnels hastening down neighbouring hills, each under the impression that it was the original river. Beyond turning a few saw-mills, the streams of Switzerland are asked to do nothing but enjoy themselves, and they use the sanction to the full.

The antithesis of Switzerland in this matter of water is Holland. That is anything but the water's paradise ; it is the water's almshouse, infirmary, or, better still, dormitory. Those sluggish, fast-asleep canals ! Where there is water there should be sound, and you may live in Holland a lifetime and never hear a trickle. Norfolk, our English Holland, does the thing much better, for it varies the monotony of inanimate canals with rivers and broads. That emergence from a long narrow cutting into a sparkling windy broad,

Well-Sinkers

which the Norfolk wherryman joys in, is unknown to the Dutch. My own belief has always been that the way to travel in Holland is to cross the sea thither in a Norfolk wherry. Choose a calm season and load your craft with good food—a few Virginia hams, for example, and a joint or two of beef in a refrigerator. Then you will be free of Dutch railways, Dutch trams, Dutch steamboats, Dutch hotels, and the eternal Dutch veal.



Well-sinkers are vastly superior persons. They are clean. The gentleman who at the present moment, even as I write, is proceeding in a vertical line nearer and nearer to the centre of the earth and farther and farther from the surface of my garden, is humane and considerate. He leaves very little mess, he works in a small area, and he makes no noise. Better still, he keeps himself hidden. One's only chance of seeing him is to lean over the edge of the hole and peer down. After a while, when the eyes are accustomed to the darkness, one is aware of a patient little gnome, absurdly foreshortened, filling a bucket with a spade. It is the well-sinker. At the top, with their brawny arms at ease on the windlass,

The Old Speciousness

are his two subordinates. When he calls out they will pull up the bucket ; one will tip it into a barrow ; the other, when the barrow is full, will discreetly wheel it away and empty it ; and some day we shall have water. The men at the windlass talk and smoke and are happy ; the man below toils all day. But—a strange variation upon the usual rule—it is the man below who is the master, the employer, the capitalist, and the men above who are mere labourers. The well-sinker is a skilled craftsman, and a magician also, very often, for he must divine as well as dig.



Well-sinkers are harmless compared with builders. Builders are the devil. While the men were digging the well and upsetting the place, it seemed as if "certain other little things might be done too." The old, old excuse ! And now the builders are in full blast. In a moment of weakness it was agreed that a new kitchen might be a good thing. We wanted more room there. And then over the kitchen could be placed another bedroom. And so forth—the old, old speciousness. To build the kitchen, it would be necessary to clear away a little ground—"a very little," said 'he architect—for foundation. We ex-

Builders

pected, therefore, a slight scene of confusion ; but nothing compared with that which is a-going on. The extraordinary and utterly disproportionate quantity of earth which can come from a very slight clearance of ground is a revelation. Mountains of it confront us : one on the bed in front of my room, all over some dearly-prized plants and rows and rows of tulip bulbs ; another on the new grass plot ; a heap of sharp-edged stones reclining against the new mulberry tree ; a wheelbarrow track between the roses ; more mountains in the orchard ; no trace of the old Gloire de Dijon that a month ago covered the east end of the house and bloomed every year right into December ; no trace of the jessamine ; and heaps of brick and piles of sand in the more sacred parts of the demesne.

With builders there is nothing to do but endure. Speech is unavailing. Very often they don't even hear it. They go about intent on one thing—the utter and complete demolition of everything old that you hold dear, in order that something new may be forthcoming which you did not really want. They are brusque, unswerving, unapproachable. They are not men at all, or they would care for some of the things that men esteem : grass, clean paths, moss-

A New House

covered roofs, damp-stained walls, climbing plants. They are a race apart, a group of aliens in our midst, the enemies of beauty. In short, they are builders.

The real trouble is bricks and mortar. If we were content to live in wooden houses, all would be well. One brick can spoil a landscape, but no quantity of accumulated logs can injure it. Indeed, a heap of logs is always appropriate, always fits itself naturally into the picture. Planks certainly are not becoming; but planks are for the most part kept indoors. Had I Garfield's chance, I would never exchange the Log Cabin for the White House.

My deliberate opinion is that the only tolerable way to have a new brick house, or new alterations made to an old one, is to go away when the order is given, and not return until you have had word that the builders have gone and their desecrating handiwork has been made good. Then come home, take a good nerve tonic, choose a fine day, have a very excellent lunch, and inspect the result.



This morning's post brings me a letter containing stories of Sussex eccentrics, or "characters," as we say, two of which are perhaps worth telling here. One

A Sussex Character

celebrates a yeoman whose fidelity to the past is such, that he recently gave to his friends a golden wedding supper in a room lighted by rush-lights kindled with a tinder-box. All was well with the old couple then, but many years earlier his wife had an obstinate spell which was cured only by the most drastic measures. One morning she refused to get up, and maintained her position until her husband threw a truss of straw under the bed and set fire to it. That was her Waterloo. She emerged defeated and tractable. Of the other "character" it is told that he erected in his orchard the notice, "God helps those that help themselves, but God help those that I catch helping themselves."



One of the marks of difference—and a very pleasant one—between Christmas in the country and Christmas in town is the friendliness that the day establishes. Where houses are few and where roads have no pavements (the pavement connoting a press of wayfarers too considerable to permit of social exchanges as they pass), there may be greetings among strangers all through the year. But on Christmas morning these greetings are more than optional, they

The Changing Seasons

are the law. There is no more choice about it: it must be done. I have seen extremes of weather bring about the same destruction of social barriers, the same overthrow of insular reserve. A heavy snow-storm will set up the kindest relations between country-dwellers who have never spoken before. And a thunderstorm will loosen tongues that were still during equable seasons. But, next to Christmas, a snowstorm is most potent.

Will the seasons, one wonders, ever readjust themselves, or is the tendency of the future to push cold weather farther and farther into the next year? As a matter of fact, winter does not, according to the almanac, begin until the end of December, although we are in the habit of considering him here directly it is necessary to light fires; and literature shows him in his best form on the day of the Nativity. What I want to know is, is literature to be trusted? Was there ever skating on December 25? Did people ever have to dig their way out of their houses to attend Christmas morning church? Or is the whole story a piece of agreeable idealism which we owe mainly to Dickens?

Though it be only a myth, I can find good grounds in memory for it—were memory not so deceptive!

Old Christmases

Looking back on my childhood, it seems to me that Christmas used always to be cold and frosty. I may be wrong; the impression may have come from Christmas cards; but the feeling is very strong. Surely the Christmas walk began with a cold nose. Surely we found a slide before the ramble was over, or at least one of those forlorn winter ponds, with stones and tins and sticks on its bleak surface of ice. I recollect so clearly the thin ice-covering of the puddles in the cart ruts, and the joy of stamping through, or driving a stick into them, and seeing the cracks radiate suddenly from the fracture. And the ringing quality of the road itself, especially if there happened to be wooden palings at the side! I remember that as belonging to Christmas. Yet were the Christmases twenty years ago like this, or am I confusing December days with January days?—for now we do not come (if at all) to frost worth calling frost until the New Year is a growing child. Our Old Years slink out in muggy mildness, with sopping boots, where once (if my memory is right, and if Dickens and the Christmas card designers are not deceivers) they skated into Limbo, or pushed their way thither through a snowdrift.



The Christmas Sportsman

And—another question—does the Christmas sportsman still spread dismay, if not disaster, among the sparrows on that gentle anniversary? I remember, in our walks over the Downs—for thither we always trudged—how we would come upon one of these brave gunners, or watch in the distance another as he stalked a minute bird across a field, until, its seat on the ground seeming sufficiently solid, he felt it safe to pull his trigger. The bird-catchers with their nets used also to love Christmas Day, and to do well on it, I fear. I had not thought of the Christmas sportsman of those times for years, until last winter in Italy we met, descending a mountain path, his Southern correlative: a gaily-dressed, almost operative, peasant, carrying one of the casual weapons that every people except the Anglo-Saxon seem to be satisfied with, and a bag of generous proportions borne by an attendant boy. To the best of my vision it held nothing, but there may have lurked in its corners two or three of those minute feathered insects which, in a putrid state, under the handsome style “gibier,” find their way (on little rafts of toast) into the menu of the smaller hotels of Italy and the Midi.

It will sound heretical, I have no doubt, but for my own part I should like to have some assurance

Obsolete Snow

that we had done with snow for ever in this country. I remember with a glow of satisfaction certain snow-ball fights, and I would not be thought to wish boys to lose that excellent sport; but Science, with all her resources, ought to devise some way for snow to fall only into playgrounds and such gardens as want it. We are past snow in the towns; the vestries are banded together to eject it, and if they fail, the newspapers are filled with protests, signifying that the householders are against it too. And, personally, I am against it in the country. Unrelieved snow is a blighting prospect, and few things are so saddening to me as the sight of hills and fields patched with reluctant drifts. White—save of horses and sheep, of geese and pear blossom, of the sails of ships and crests of waves—has no place in my terrestrial scenes. White is for the clouds.

A Possibility



THE Rich are free from money cares,
The pains of hunger pass them by,
Sweet cleanliness is ever theirs,
And means each whim to gratify.

More Verse !

The Poor, how circumscribed their lot,
How small a world they comprehend !
They starve ambition in a cot,
And touch the cap until the end.

How is the balance trimmed? Perchance
This solace Fate extends to slaves,
This balm for wounds of circumstance :
The Poor lie warmer in their graves.

Albums and Crackers ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪

I PUT these two very dissimilar things together, because they both worked so hard the other evening for the success of an entertainment. But they were not really joined : a dinner came between them.

It was an old-fashioned Christmas party, and the albums were employed in the old-fashioned way to kill the *mauvais quart d'heure* before the meal ; the crackers melted and fused the company after. At dinner we were all still a little stiff, for we were mostly related and had not all of us quite played the game during the past year : we had not invited each other as often as we might have done, or, being invited, we had had other engagements ; in short, we had been related. We were, therefore—the older ones—a little formal, not to say sad (for Christmas is not

A Reconciler

too merry a season as you get on in years), but the crackers put that all right in a moment. It is their mission.

No matter what the constitution of the party, the arrival of the moment for pulling the crackers, which must on no account be anticipated, puts the crowning touch to the *abandon* of the festival. Until now the older guests have made some effort to be their age; but the report of the first cracker, like the preliminary bomb on a Brock night at the Crystal Palace, is the sign that the fun henceforth is to be fast and furious. The battle of frivolity has begun. No uncle, however stern his cast of feature, no aunt, in whatever advanced stage of acidulation, can maintain a fully operative attitude of disapproval or discouragement while wearing a paper cap of undignified shape. It is for this reason that crackers containing paper caps are the best. By their aid the humanisation and humiliation of relations is consummated. For three hundred and sixty-four days these relations have been having it (more or less) their own unlovely way. On the three hundred and sixty-fifth—with the aid of Tom Smith—they can be rendered ridiculous for a brief hour or so. By all means, then, let the crackers have caps in them. Do not be fobbed off

Paper Caps

with jewellery, with wire puzzles, or with sugared almonds. Crackers enshrining nothing better than sugared almonds affect the discriminating, self-respecting child almost like a slap in the face.

But if paper caps be not obtainable, there is an alternative. It has not the merit of the paper caps, but it will serve ; it is (emphatically) enough ; nay, it is too much. This alternative is musical instruments. There are crackers that contain musical instruments, chiefly wind, which, when blown all together, as at a party—such is human nature—they will be, make a painful noise, very distressing to elderly relations. The person who blows is, by a happy dispensation of providence, insensible to this discord. It is therefore desirable that a few of the less popular of the company should be deprived of their rightful weapons. This can be (and invariably is) done by a grasping schoolboy.

To return to the paper caps, some persons there are who put them on perfunctorily, just to please the dear children (odd that the uglification—as the Gryphon says—of the adult is the speediest way to please the child !), and very hastily remove them as soon after as may be. Others, again, wear them doggedly throughout the evening, determined to be

Ritual

young again to the full. Others discover, on glancing at the mirror, that the caps are rather becoming (as they very often are), and with much assumed resignation and secret satisfaction retain them till the party is over. While there is still another section who forget entirely that their heads are covered at all (the paper is so light), and gravely converse in corners with their contemporaries on the state of the Stocks, the absence of frost, and the rottenness of the Government, unconscious that their sapient words proceed from a brain crowned with a dunce's cap.

There are two ways of exploding a cracker. One is for each party to the transaction to grasp firmly the paper ends, and, averting the head and shutting the eyes, pull the cracker in two. The other is for each party to take between finger and thumb merely the end of the strips of card which produce the detonation, and, averting the head and shutting the eyes, pull sharply. This plan is adopted in the interests of children who collect the gelatinous coloured paper. To avert the head and shut the eyes is a rite, even though fear be a stranger to your bosom. Everyone who respects Christmas traditions, be he even a V.C. or African explorer, quails in the presence of a cracker. Rightly, the person in whose hand the larger portion

Albums

of the cracker is retained is the winner, just as with a wishing bone. At a well-ordered party, every person has a share in two explosions. But as there are always present one or two genuinely timid guests, the wise boy is able to double his number of legitimate pulls. A hostess with a nice feeling for art ranges the crackers (some people call them cosaques, but that is affectation) two and two, like cross bones or a dancing Highlander's swords, and very decorative and stimulating they are, against the white damask. A few may fittingly be disposed about the cake, to be watched with avidity through the meal, and to teach a lesson of patience.

But I am forgetting the albums, which really worked harder and at greater odds (their time coming before dinner), and ought to have been celebrated first. And here again are relations involved, for every album is a family portrait gallery, and it is impossible for any one of them to turn the pages without dwelling on the consolatory reflection that, odd as one's own relations undoubtedly are, other people's are odder.

The albums of the future are likely to be more interesting since the rise of the amateur has brought flexibility into the art of photography. The Sunday afternoon family group "snapped in the garden" is a

Pervasive Cameras

distinct improvement on the old *tableaux vivants* procured in a studio ; and Jack, with a pipe over a novel, or Lucy playing with the dog, are more life-like than Jack in new clothes, and Lucy in an expression of seriousness pumped up for the occasion. But it is appalling to think of the multiplication of photographs now going forward. A studio is in every street, and every schoolboy has his camera, and few bathrooms are what they were. There is some balm in the reflection that not all the amateur photographers ever get so far as developing, and that some who can develop are unable to print ; but the fact remains that, whereas a score of years ago one man one photograph was a liberal annual allowance, to-day every man and woman is liable to be taken, wittingly or unwittingly, a dozen times a week.

As for the new photography—the X rays, the cinematograph, and all the other inventions that tread upon each others' heels—it adds terror to life. Professor Röntgen (whose motto might be "Praise God Barebones") has made it feasible for the family album of the future to supersede the cupboard as the home of the family skeletons, and it is not impossible that the cinematograph may soon be domesticated.

Just as by the contemplation of photographs of

Old Photographs

places one can reconstruct a holiday journey, so by passing in review a collection of old portraits can one reconstruct the past. It is a melancholy pleasure. Here, truly enough, are the faces, but, alas ! how many of the old familiar friends are gone. The stout leaves of the album, with square and gilded edge, fall one by one as they are turned over as if they were the leaves of the Book of Life itself. The return to the photograph in after years is in sharp contrast to the jesting manner in which it was taken or given. The exchange of photographs is no very merry joke ; these new smiling faces that the morning's post has brought—how will they look when twenty years have passed ? What a tale of transitoriness of things will the contemplation of them then tell ! Meanwhile, here in the album on the table are boys one was at school with, and girls one was in love with, and friends who have dropped away, and grotesque relatives ; and, worst of all, a score of smug versions of one's own self. Not even Narcissus, with all his capacity for self-worship, could have admired an old photograph of himself, however eagerly he might hasten to pose for a new one. The camera has for some temperaments no terrors. There are men and women who have been taken once a year ever since they were born, and who preserve the

Environment

pictures in chronological order, to mark, like the rings in a tree, their annual growth. There are others who never have been taken, and never will be taken ; except surreptitiously under extremely undignified circumstances. To be royal is to spend a large proportion of one's life before the lens ; to be a cricketer is to spend a larger ; to be a popular actress is to live in a studio.

To be photographed is not the ordeal it was. The instantaneous dry plate has removed the necessity for the old process. A sitter is not now fixed in iron clamps—almost gagged—as once he used to be. Nor is the background to his personality so impressive. Twenty or thirty years ago, the old photographs tell us, it was the correct thing to figure as the one human element in a stupendous landscape. Stretching away for miles are hills and valleys and fertile plains, and here, in the foreground, unconscious of her isolation, is Aunt Matilda in a crinoline. We have forsworn pillars too. Uncle Joshua, were he taken again to-day, would no longer be asked to lean negligently on a broken column, suggesting that he had just achieved a considerable earthquake. Nor would it be necessary for him to dangle his hat and cross his legs with painful and studied negligence. From the best studios the

Photographers' Furniture

rustic seat and rural stile have also passed away. The vignette was their extermination. But photographers' furniture still leaves much to be desired. Their heavy plush upholstery is like nothing in real life.

But it is not the posture, nor the ancient air of the faded picture, that most eloquently proclaims the photograph old. The costume is more convincing than these. Remote, almost as the power of Assyrian monarchs, are the fashions depicted in last year's *Punch*. Yesterday's photograph is as old as yesterday's paper. If we were taken nude, albums might become less melancholy.

To throw away old photographs savours of inhumanity. In one family, at least, the worst specimens have been gathered together in an album lettered "The Chamber of Horrors." This is rude. It is also perilous, for if an aunt were casually to take up the book, expecting a laugh, and find herself figuring therein, she would diffuse gall. Nor would it temper her acerbity to any extent to assure her that the children meant no harm. Children are, in fact, the bitterest foes of the old photograph. The younger generation is suspicious of the early friendships of their elders; it does not seem to them credible that

An "Old Maid" Pack

persons who wore such clothes could ever have been interesting. Hence the children in a certain family dwelling not a hundred miles from town have fashioned an Old Maid pack out of old photographs, the old maid herself being the portrait of their chief aversion. She has not, however, yet learned this, although now and then she visits the house. Truth, luckily, does not always "out."

A Gentle Adviser

I HAVE called Gervase Markham¹ a gentle adviser, because the quality of gentleness has such prominence in his pages. His sentences have a gentle euphony ; his poetry has a gentle melancholy ; his attitude to life, as we glimpse it between the lines, is one of gentleness. In his treatises he does not command—or, as we say of small tyrants, “order about”—he advises, suggests, in a word, persuades. “If you will roast a Piece of fresh Sturgeon,” says he, in the cookery, by way of courteous opening, and then come the directions ; and, “If you will Roast a chine

¹ Gervase Markham (1566–1636), soldier, man of letters, dilettante, and the author of very many manuals of farriery, sport, agriculture, horticulture, cookery, medicine, and the home arts generally. “Which,” says he, in one of his prefaces, if men will “once take pains to read them, they will after affirm them worthy of choice bosomes.” The volume from which my quotations are made is a compendium entitled *Country Contentments*.

Coaxing the Hawk

of beef, a loyn of Mutton, a Capon and a lark, all at one instant, and at one fire, and have all ready together and none burnt," do so and so.

Not content with his own mild persuasion, the gentle Markham would have us all gentle too, and herein, I think, lies his peculiar attraction. He presupposes an affectionate nature to be a property of his reader. To the owner of a pack of hounds he addresses this passage (in which, as in that which follows, the italics are mine): "You shall not suffer your Whelps to suck above two months at the most, but then you shall Wean them, and if the house you keep be of great receipt, and many servants, you shall let your Cook bring up your best Whelps, and your Dairymaid your second-best, and the rest you shall put forth among your friends or Tenants, *according unto the love you possess in the Country.*" That a man may keep hounds and yet possess no love in the country, is a state of things beyond Markham's ken.

And thus coaxingly is the erring Hawk to be brought into the way of rectitude: "All Hawks generally are to be manned after one manner, that is to say, by watching and keeping them from sleep, by a continuall carrying them upon your fist, and by a most familiar stroking and playing with them, with

Horses

the wing of a dead fowl, or such like, and by often gazing and looking them in the face, *with a loving and gentle countenance*, and so making them acquainted with the man."

And in breaking-in or riding a horse, we must never forget to cherish the animal. See how prettily Markham instructs us: "Now of cherishings, there are generally in use but three, as first the voice, which being delivered smoothly and lovingly, as crying *holla so boy, there boy there*, and such like, gives the Horse both cheerfulness of Spirit and a knowledge that he hath done well, then the hand by clapping him gently on the Neck or Buttock, or giving him grass or other food to eat, after he hath pleased you; and lastly, the big end of the Rod, by rubbing him therewith upon the withers or mane, which is very pleasing and delightful to the Horse." The antitheses to these cherishing cries are, *Ha villain, carridro, diablo*, delivered sharply and roughly. Such like threatenings terrify the horse, says Markham, and make him afraid to disobey.

But it is not often that Markham writes of severe measures, and then with apparent distaste. If, however, the husbandman is to progress and the sportsman justify himself, animals must be killed

Health for the Year

Recognising the necessity, Markham lays down rules accordingly, but still with gentleness. There are, for example, certain "ravenous creatures" which destroy fish, such as the otter and the "hern," and these, in the interest of the angler, must be removed. Among them is "the King's Fisher (which is a small green bird) . . . and the way to take him is to mark his haunt where he commonly sitteth, which is ever in some bush next the river; then set a little cradle of limed straws about his seat, and they will quickly take him, for he seldome changeth, but ever sitteth upon one bough." Alas, there are few of these small green birds left to sit in England now!

Towards the whole world Markham seems to have entertained a tenderness. Of the well-being of his fellow-men he was no less solicitous. In his *Farewell to Husbandry*, the directions as to the husbandman's labours for the several months of the year are rounded off with a thoughtful word of advice as to the care of his health. "In January he must keep warm, and rather with exercise than sauce increase his appetite." In February, March, and April he shall "bleed as art may direct." In May he is bidden "beware of Mountebanks, and old wives' tales, for the latter hath no ground, and the other no truth but apparent

Sweete Isabella

cosenage." In September he must shun, "as death," riot and surfeit. In October he may "use all moderate sports, for anything now is good which reviveth the spirits." In December we find this entry: "And lastly, for your health, eat meats that are hot and nourishing, drink good wine that is neat, sprightly, and lusty; keep the body well clad, and thy house warm; forsake whatsoever is flegmatick, and banish all care from thine heart, for nothing is more unwholesome than a troubled spirit."

Gervase Markham, himself an Elizabethan,¹ had a

¹ Isabel Markham, great-aunt to Gervase, was one of the maids of honour thrown into prison with the Princess Elizabeth. Afterwards she became the lady of Sir John Harrington, Elizabeth's godson, who "firste thoughte her fayre as she stode at the Princesse's windowe in goodlye attyre and talkede to dyvers in the courte yarde." He called her "Sweete Isabella Markham," and wrote poems to her during his courtship, and after they were married. The father of Gervase was Robert Markham, the nephew of Sweet Isabella. He was twice High Sheriff of Nottingham and thrice Knight of the Shire, and was thus commemorated in Elizabeth's couplet made upon her Nottinghamshire knights:—

"Gervase the gentle, Stanhope the stout,
Markham the lion, and Sutton the lout."

If, as may without violence be supposed, Gervase Markham was named after "Gervase the Gentle," the boy's assumption of the characteristic as well as of the name is curious.

Elizabethan Enthusiasms

brimming share of the Elizabethan gift of enthusiasm. Words were to these early writers like a new toy to a happy child, and they played with them with as much delight. The old spontaneous joy has passed. For the winsomeness, the comeliness, that marked the literature of that early untroubled day of rebirth, we look almost in vain. The world is no longer new every morning as once it was.

Throughout his books Markham displays this zest : the subject upon which he is for the moment engaged is the finest subject in the world. High praise, when it is honest, is the pleasantest of reading, and hence part of Markham's charm. Superlatives are a little out of date with us. The finest edge has been taken from life ; the sun is, in our day, too high in the heavens for the ancient energy and zest. The Elizabethans knew the glory of his rising, when the dewdrops glistened, and the lark sang at heaven's gate, and enthusiasm inhabited the clear light.

Gervase Markham now and again essayed poetry, but with small measure of success. The verse was diffuse and over-saccharine, avoiding statements. Yet there was little reason that he should feel discouragement at his inability to sing with the highest. He had all the enthusiasm of the poet, although in

The Musical Kennel

verse he was powerless to give it expression. Like so many other men, he was a better poet in life than in literature. This gift of appreciation enabled him to detect the finest, most picturesque feature in whatever he bent his mind upon. To a man not similarly endowed, when writing upon hounds and their treatment, such a passage as the following would, for example, never have been possible:—

“If you would have your Kennel for sweetness of cry, then you must compound it of some large dogs, that have deep, solemn Mouthes, and are swift in spending, which must, as it were, bear the base in the consort; then a double number of roaring, and loud ringing Mouthes, which must bear the counter tenor; then some hollow plain sweet Mouthes, which must bear the mean or middle part. And so with these three parts of Musick you shall make your cry perfect: and herein you shall observe that these Hounds thus mixt, do run just and even together, and not hang off loose from one another, which is the vilest sight that may be; and you shall understand that this composition is best to be made of the swiftest and largest deep-mouthed dog, the slowest middle-siz'd dog, and the shortest-legg'd slender dog, amongst these you may cast in a couple or two small single

The Admiral Poetic

beagles, which as small trebles may warble amongst them : the cry will be a great deal the more sweet."

How ridiculous for a man who could write such a passage as this, or compose some of the cookery recipes that follow, ever to wish for fame as a poet ! But often we stumble on our best things.

Anything less dramatic than Markham's *Tragedie of Sir Richard Grenville* cannot well be imagined. It is wanting in every kind of force, and the knight himself resembles more nearly an enfeebled missionary than a sea-ravener. Markham's gentleness here became his enemy. Fortunately we have Lord Tennyson's ballad—

"And Sir Richard said again : 'We be all true English men,
Let us hang those dogs of Seville, the children of the Devil,
For I never turn'd my back upon Don or Devil yet.'"

That, you remember, was the beginning of the fight.
To such a tune men will dare any odds.

"Sink me the ship, Master Gunner, sink her, split her in
twain !

Fall into the hands of God, not into the hands of Spain."

That was how, according to the late Laureate, Sir Richard Grenville bade the contest cease. Markham's

The Admiral Sinister

hero abjured all such brevity and pertinence, as this one of the stanzas embodying his last orders (he was an unconscionable long time dying, and talking about it) will show. Sir Richard is prone on the deck of the *Revenge*. All around Spaniards are looming. Sir Richard finds breath and opportunity to say, among many other things—

"Sweet Maister Gunner, split our keele in twaine,
We cannot live, whom hope of life hath left,
Dying, our deaths more glorious lives retaine,
Let not our ship, of shame and foile bereft,
Unto our foemen for a prize remaine ;
Sinke her, and sinking with the *Greeke* wee'll cry,
Best not to be, or beeing soon to dye."

"He was," says Stevenson, writing, in his essay on the English admirals, of Sir Richard Grenville, "he was a noted tyrant to his crew : a dark, bullying fellow apparently ; and it is related of him that he would chew and swallow wineglasses, by way of convivial levity, till the blood ran out of his mouth."

Gervase Markham was perhaps truest poet when in the kitchen. There the inspiration denied to him when he would consciously serve the Muses flooded his being and impelled him to great achievement. From what authoritative anthology of "prose-poems"

A Sallet

could this recipe for the compounding of an excellent sallet be omitted?—

“Take a good quantity of blancht almonds, and with your shredding knife cut them grossly ; then take as many raisins of the sun clean washt, and the stones pickt out, as many figs shred like the almonds, as many capers, twice so many olives, and as many currants as of all the rest, clean washt, a good handful of the small tender leaves of red sage and spinage ; mixe all these well together with good store of sugar, and lay them in the bottome of a great dish ; then put unto them vinegar and oyl, and scrape more sugar over all ; then take oranges and lemmons, and paring away the outward pills, cut them into thin slices, then with those slices cover the sallet all over, which done, take the fine thin leaf of the red cole flower, and with them cover the oranges and lemmons all over ; then over those red leaves, lay another course of old olives, and the slices of well-pickled cucumbers, together with the very inward heart of cabbage-lettuce cut into slices ; then adorn the sides of the dish, and the top of the sallet, with more slices of lemmons and oranges, and so serve it up.”

What comely phrases ! Contrast with them the

March-Pane

bald and unalluring directions to be found in a modern *Enquire Within*—such a work as Markham would have edited—and you will see how the felicities of language have passed from daily life. Alack! what have we not lost in our search for brevity and precision? Where now are “the raisins of the sun,” where the “very inward heart”? And the niggard accuracy of avoirdupois has taken the place of the generous (if vague) abundance indicated by “pretty quantity” and “good store.” None the less one looks upon *Enquire Within* as a severely valuable book.

Markham's March-pane recipe is another lyric :—

“To make the best March-pane, take the best Jordan Almonds, and blanch them in warm water, then put them into a stone mortar, and with a wooden pestle beat them to pap, then take of the finest refined sugar well searst, and with it Damask Rose water, beat it to a good stiff paste, allowing almost to every Jordan Almond three spoonfulls of sugar, then when it is brought thus to a paste, lay it upon a fair Table, and strewing searst sugar under it, mould it like leven, then with a rowling-pin rowl it forth, and lay it upon wafers washed with Rose Water ; then pinch it about the sides, and put it into what form you please ; then

A Thousand Damask Roses

strew searst sugar all over it, which done, wash it over with Rose water and sugar mixt together, for that will make the Ice ; then adorn it with comfits, gilding, or whatsoever devices you please, and so set it into a hot stove, and there bake crispy, and serve it forth."

"To make sweet water of the best kind," he directs elsewhere, "take a thousand Damask roses." A thousand damask roses ! What opulence ! And what a picture it calls up : the English housewife in her white sleeves, her keys at her side ; the sunny morning-room ; the mass of wine-dark petals on the table ; laughing children running in from the rosary bringing more, more. Opulence is indeed the note under Markham's régime. Mother Earth is called upon to squander her vegetable riches ; fragrant, spreading gardens are depleted to assist the flavour of a single dish. And all is legitimate, all in due order ; there is no violence, no distortion. Gervase Markham could not have been less shocked than Keats himself at a plate of nightingales' tongues. We are never tempted to charge him with greed ; Gervase Markham was too various a man for that—once again, too gentle. At most he was, in Dr. Kitchener's phrase, "a notable fork." Some idea of the estimation in which he held the culinary art may

Marrow-bone Pye

be gathered from the following positive statement concerning the English housewife :—"She that is utterly ignorant therein [cookery], may not by Laws of strict Justice challenge the freedome of marriage, because indeed she can then but perform half her vow : for she may love and obey, but she cannot cherish, serve, and keep him with that true duty which is ever expected." Markham is rarely so dogmatic. For the sake of the marriage tie it is as well, perhaps, that the opinion is not generally held.

See what roots and fruits went to the perfection of the best Marrow-bone Pye, of which, despite the marrow-bone basis, a vegetarian might surely partake without sin.

"After you have mixt the crusts of the best sort for pasts, and raised the coffin in such a manner as you please ; you shall first in the bottome thereof lay a course of marrow of beef, mixt with currants ; then upon it a lay of the soals of artichokes, after they have been boyled and are divided from the thistle ; then cover them with marrow, currants, and great raisins, the stones pickt out ; then lay a course of potatoes cut in thick slices, after they have been boyled soft, and are clean pilled ; then cover them with marrow, currants, great raisins, sugar, and cinna-

A Humble Feast

mon ; then lay a layer of candied eringo roots mixt very thick with the slices of dates ; then cover it with marrow, currants, great raisins, sugar, cinnamon, and dates, with a few Damask prunes, and so bake it ; and after it is bak't, pour into it, as long as it will receive it, white wine, rosewater, sugar, and cinnamon and vinegar mixt together, and candy all the cover with rosewater and sugar only, and so set it into the oven a little, and serve it forth."

Not only in the composition of each dish is this opulence to be found, but in the multitude and variety of them on the table. Gervase Markham's instructions to the docile housewife on the ordering of a royal feast may be left where they are, but the following counsel, being addressed to "any Good man," demands publicity :—

"Now for a more humble Feast, or an ordinary proportion which any good man may keep in his Family, for the entertainment of his true and worthy friends, it must hold limitation with his provision and the season of the year ; For Summer affords what Winter wants, and Winter is Master of that which Summer can but with difficulty have. It is good then for him that intends to Feast, to set down the full number of his full dishes, that is, dishes of

Ancient Appetites

meat that are of substance, and not empty, or for shew ; and of these sixteen is a good proportion for one course unto one messe, as thus, for example : First, a shield of Brawn with mustard, Secondly, a boyld Capon, Thirdly, a boyld piece of beef, Fourthly, a chine of Beef roasted, Fifthly, a Neat's tongue roasted, Sixthly, a Pig roasted, Seventhly, a Chewets bak'd, Eighthly, a goose roasted, Ninthly, a swan roasted, Tenthly, a Turkey roasted, the Eleventh, a Haunch of Venison roasted, the Twelfth, a Pasty of Venison, the Thirteenth, a Kid with a pudding in the belly, the Fourteenth, an Olive-pye, the Fifteenth, a couple of Capons, the Sixteenth, a Custard or Dousets. Now to these full dishes may be added Sallets, Fricases, Quelque choses, and devised paste, as many dishes more, which make the full service no less than two-and-thirty dishes, which is as much as can conveniently stand on one Table, and in one mess ; and after this manner you may proportion both your second and third course, holding fulness in one half of the dishes, and shew in the other, which will be both frugall in the spender, contentment to the guest, and much pleasure and delight to the beholders."

With this insight into our ancestors' appetites may we not understand more clearly the Elizabethan

A Suggestion

spirit—its breadth, optimism, radiance? Markham in the kitchen has himself something of the grand manner of the early dramatists. At a table groaning beneath such dishes, so wealthy in picturesque abundance, in essential sweetness and vigour, and withal racy of the soil, there must abide enthusiasm. Our own literature would perhaps be robuster if we could reinstate some of these old eating customs.

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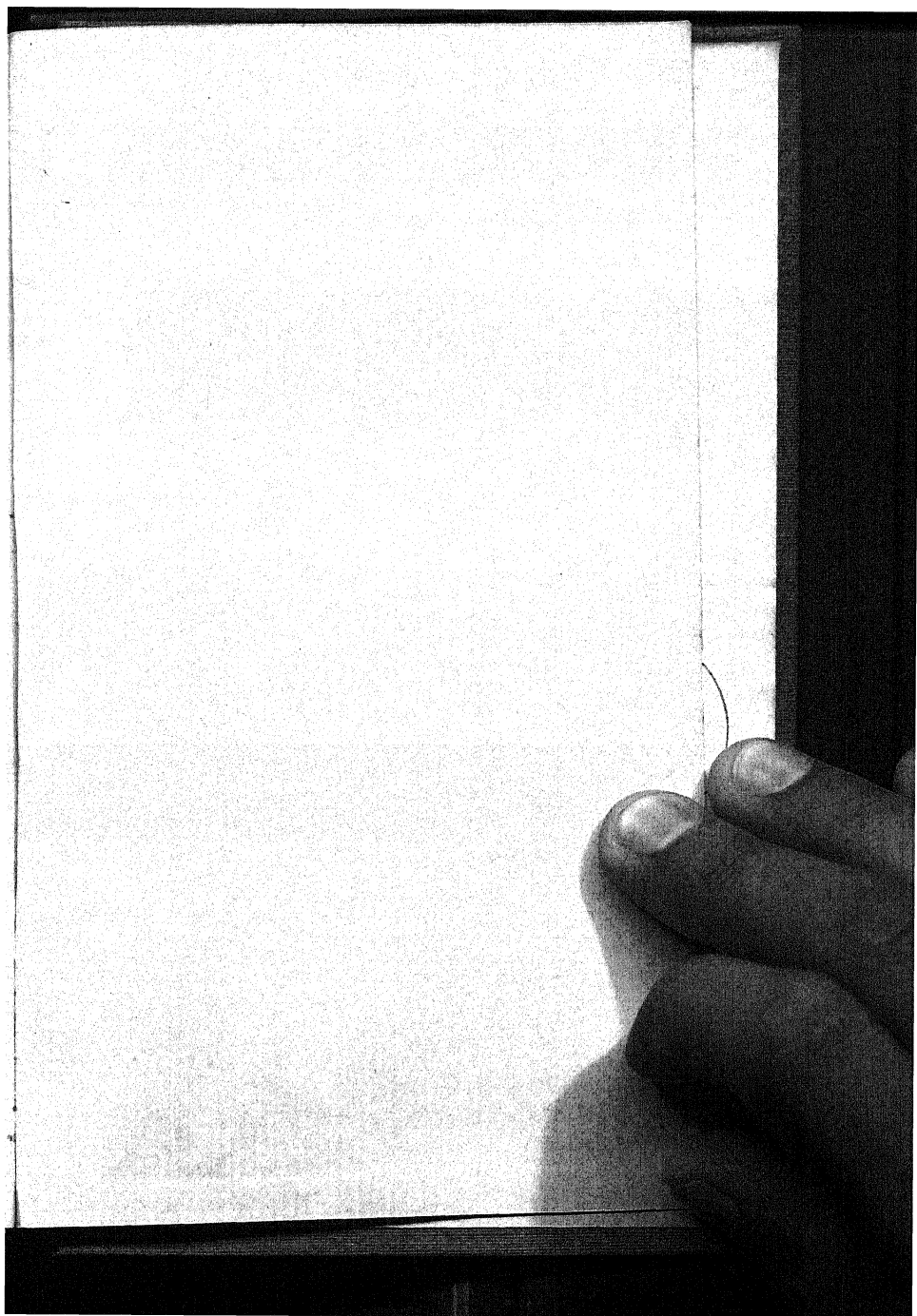
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